

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



3 July 2012

Mr S Taylor  
Headteacher  
Park Lane Learning Trust  
Park Lane  
Exley  
Halifax  
HX3 9LG

Dear Mr Taylor

### **Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: English**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 26 and 27 June 2012 to look at work in English.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is satisfactory and improving.

- Attainment has risen strongly in English at the end of Key Stage 4 although it remains below average. In 2009, 35% of students gained A\* to C grades and this improved to 56% last year. This upward trend is set to continue in 2012. Very few students achieve the highest grades A or A\* although the number of B grades is increasing.
- Historically, progress has been satisfactory but this is also improving. The proportion of students making the expected progress increased significantly last year to be in line with the average figure. Given low literacy levels on entry to the school, some students make good progress. Boys do less well than girls in English. Students known to be eligible for free school meals perform well in comparison with those who are not eligible.

- Students behave well and are keen to learn. They are friendly and polite. They stay on task and try hard to do well. Many students lack basic literacy skills and they tend to be over-reliant on their teacher.

### **Quality of teaching in English**

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- There is some variability in the quality of teaching, although staffing has become more stable. Strengths of lessons include: the enthusiasm and commitment of teachers; good relationships; the engagement of students through lively and varied activities; clear and effective learning objectives; and an emphasis on creative and imaginative uses of language.
- Learning was limited in some lessons by a tendency to teach to a preconceived pattern rather than responding to students' learning needs as the lesson developed. In these lessons, opportunities were missed to extend or consolidate learning as the teacher moved activities on too quickly. Opportunities were also missed to model writing for students.
- Most students enjoy English and speak highly of their teachers. Students describe lessons as being lively and varied, with teachers keen to help.
- Assessment is good. There is a consistency of approach across the department. Students' formal assessments are marked in detail and with helpful identification of strengths and areas to develop. Students are aware of their levels and what needs to be improved.

### **Quality of the curriculum in English**

The quality of the curriculum in English is good with some outstanding features.

- The curriculum is distinctive at Key Stage 3 as it is based largely around the study of literary texts. Nevertheless, it remains broad and balanced as teachers use this as a focus for exploring a wide range of other texts, including media texts. The approach ensures that students read a far wider range of literary texts than is often the case, including some classic texts from the literary heritage. There is also an emphasis on reading widely and with enjoyment as younger students are allocated time in English for personal reading.
- Teachers are given flexibility to choose the texts that are most suitable for their students and to plan work around the assessment focuses. However, given some variability in provision across classes, more guidance is needed on content and approaches in the Key Stage 3 programme.
- Another innovative element of the curriculum is the use of the Cambridge International GCSE at Key Stage 4. This course builds well on the department's Key Stage 3 curriculum, and provides support in a context of high mobility with good opportunities for broader cultural development.
- There is a comprehensive and well-planned whole-school literacy programme. This includes the work of a literacy coordinator and working party, training for staff and literacy work in different departments. It is

supported by an active and effective Learning Resource Centre which leads on many initiatives and a new DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) initiative. A good range of enrichments includes a reading club, a spelling bee and a monthly students' newspaper.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in English**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good with some outstanding features.

- The department is well led by an experienced subject leader with a clear vision for English. This has shaped the English curriculum and provides a good sense of direction to work in the subject. Teachers are dedicated and there is good collaboration and sharing of ideas within the department. There are also good links with the special educational needs coordinator, primary schools and parents and carers.
- There is a good emphasis on further improvements to teaching and learning. Teachers have individual action plans to help them move their teaching from good to outstanding. There is also much current discussion of the whole notion of progress within individual lessons and there are plans to improve the learning environment in lessons
- Thorough procedures for monitoring and evaluation, including joint lesson observations, work with a local consultant, and regular feedback from students contribute to an effective action plan and accurate self-evaluation although procedures for monitoring the delivery of the Key Stage 3 curriculum should be enhanced.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- improving the consistency of teaching by:
  - ensuring that lessons are flexible in responding to students' progress and make the most effective use of the activities chosen to promote learning
  - using teacher modelling to support students' writing better
- improving learning and progress in the Key Stage 3 curriculum by providing more guidance on teaching the curriculum, and extending procedures to monitor the consistency of its implementation, at Key Stage 3.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Philip Jarrett**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**