

Parkwood Hall School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	100548
Local authority	Kensington & Chelsea
Inspection number	376409
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2012
Lead inspector	Stuart Charlton

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	8–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	27
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ray Harris
Principal	Nick White
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 March 2009
School address	Beechenlea Lane Swanley Kent BR8 8DR
Telephone number	01322 664441
Fax number	01322 613163
Email address	info@parkwoodhall.rbkc.sch.uk

Age group	7–19
Inspection date(s)	20–21 June 2012
Inspection number	376409



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Introduction

Inspection team

Stuart Charlton

Additional inspector

Jackie Blount

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Ten lessons were visited and all 11 teachers seen, amounting to nearly five hours of classroom observation and two hours of observation of the annual camping residential. The majority of the lesson observations were undertaken with senior staff. Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the work of the school and looked at documentation, including the school improvement plan, assessment information, students' records and work, statements and annual reviews, as well as school policies. Thirteen questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised and also those from 41 of the staff. Sixty-eight questionnaires from students were analysed.

Information about the school

Parkwood Hall is an average sized residential special school for students with a statement of special educational needs generally relating to moderate or severe learning difficulties. Over half of the students have autistic spectrum disorder and this proportion is increasing rapidly. All students have additional communication, speech and language difficulties. The school has a wide catchment area throughout Greater London and Kent. Nearly two thirds of the students are of White British heritage and a range of other ethnic groups is represented. None of these groups is sufficiently large to provide statistically valid comparisons. There are eight looked after students. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below the national average. The school has Artsmark Gold status and Specialist School status for the performing arts. Approximately two thirds of students are boarders and some details of the provision for them are referred to in this report, although the provision overall did not form part of this inspection. The most recent Social Care inspection of the boarding provision, December 2011, judged this to be outstanding in all aspects.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Parkwood Hall is a good school. The care, support and guidance provided by all staff are of high quality. Since the previous inspection, systematic school improvement has been sustained through considerable changes in the complexity of students' needs. The school is not yet outstanding because not all teaching is of the very highest quality, and the pace of improvement to the curriculum in the sixth form is slower than in the main school.
- In their academic learning, students of different ages, backgrounds and abilities achieve well. They achieve particularly well in the main school and in the development of their communication skills.
- In the vast majority of lessons, teachers provide students with activities that engage their interest and they assess students' work regularly and accurately ensuring that students know what they need to do to improve. Occasionally, teachers do not use the information about each student's prior learning to best effect to ensure achievement is of the highest quality.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding and the overwhelming majority of students make significant improvements in learning to manage their difficulties, and bullying of any kind is almost non-existent. Students feel extremely safe and secure in school at all times. They enjoy school, have extremely positive attitudes to learning and support each other very well. Attendance levels are above average.
- The school is very well led and teachers' performance is managed effectively. There is a sustained focus on improving classroom practice and outcomes for students. The very effective way in which the school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a key factor in its success.
- The sixth form is good. However, improvements in the sixth form, notably to the curriculum, have not been pursued with the same enthusiasm and determination as those in the main school.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that by December 2012, teachers always use information about students' prior learning to best effect so that a greater proportion of teaching is outstanding, and the achievement of each student is as good as it can be.
- By April 2013, ensure that the planned improvements in the sixth form, notably to the curriculum, are fully implemented.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students make good progress overall. Since the previous inspection there have been significant improvements in most aspects of the provision but particularly in teaching and learning. These have helped to increase the proportion of pupils in the main school who achieve extremely well. The pace of development in the sixth form has not been as rapid so that, although students' achievements are good overall, fewer make outstanding progress. The low starting points of all students mean that though their understanding, knowledge and skills are developed well overall, attainment remains low because of their difficulties. All groups achieve equally well. Challenging targets are set for students so that they achieve well irrespective of their disabilities, special educational needs, gender or ethnic origin.

Many students, particularly those in the younger classes, use pictorial strategies and signing to enhance communication. Generally, they apply these skills, and their numeracy and personal skills, very well across different areas of learning. In Year 8, for example, students learn how to use pictures, signs and oral approaches to communicate, depending on their needs. They learn to recognise numbers and develop basic number concepts. Students make particularly good progress in developing their skills in communication and they learn to express their views effectively. Early reading skills and strategies are developed well with those students for whom it is appropriate. Nevertheless, by the end of Key Stage 2 their attainment in reading remains below average in spite of their good progress. By the end of Key Stage 4, a majority are able to use writing skills to communicate and record their ideas. Others can use different support systems and prompts for a range of purposes. A majority of the present students use their reading skills for a range of purposes and many read simple texts for pleasure. The majority use their developing skills in numeracy, including applying basic rules of number, in a range of different contexts in lessons.

When they reach the sixth form the overwhelming majority of students are in the boarding provision. The highly effective support they receive in this provision for their academic learning helps to ensure that the good progress in the main school is

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maintained. Students develop their basic skills in communication and numeracy effectively in more vocational and work-related activities. By the time they leave the school, all students gain a good range of national accreditation, including basic and functional skills qualifications. As a result, many are able to move on successfully to the next stage of their education.

Parents and carers report that they are very pleased with the progress their children make and their view is consistent with the inspection findings that all students make at least good progress.

Quality of teaching

Across the school, all staff have good subject knowledge, relationships between students and staff are excellent and students receive appropriately high levels of extremely effective care, guidance and support, particularly for their personal development. The work of support staff is integral to the success students achieve. Staff are very effective in building students' self-esteem and giving them the confidence to try new things, which makes an important contribution to the promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Robust systems to record students' progress have been developed, including observations and photographs of students' achievements. These are mostly used well to inform planning to meet individual needs, and show that teaching and learning over time have been good. The school is very effective in helping parents and carers to understand and to support the learning needs of students with complex learning difficulties at home.

Across the school, there are examples of outstanding teaching where staff set the highest expectations for every student and use a very wide range of teaching activities to ensure excellent outcomes for all. For example, in a Key Stage 3 literacy lesson the teacher used information about the progress students had made in previous lessons to ensure that they developed their understanding of the use of descriptive language by moving very adeptly between activities which were carefully matched to individual needs. Students' learning was exceptionally well supported by the learning support assistants using pictures, signs and verbal strategies where appropriate.

Recent improvements to the curriculum, with an emphasis on skills development, have significantly raised the proportion of outstanding teaching in the main school but the impact has been slower in the sixth form. In a small minority of the teaching across the school, teachers do not always use the information about students' prior learning to best advantage in planning their lessons to ensure that every student reaches their full potential.

Parents and carers feel their children are well taught, in line with inspection findings. Their views are typified by comments such as, 'Our son is actively encouraged to engage in practical and independent learning to build up his confidence, emotional well-being and to maximise his potential. We cannot thank the school enough.'

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

The substantial improvements that the school makes to the lives of students both at school and at home through developing positive attitudes to learning are confirmed by parents and carers, staff and students, including those who are boarders. They also confirm that the high quality of behaviour seen during the inspection is typical, including in the boarding provision. Students get on extremely well together so that there is a very calm and harmonious working atmosphere throughout the school. The extremely close liaison between the teaching and boarding staff is a crucial factor in the school's success in this area. All staff receive extensive training in behaviour management techniques and use the behaviour management system very effectively. Students are respected as individuals, and staff use praise and rewards to best effect to reinforce improvements in personal and academic development. As a result, there have been no recent exclusions. Overall students' behaviour is excellent, and in the dining room and during breaks, standards of behaviour are exemplary.

Parents and carers indicate that they feel their children are safe and secure in school and that any type of bullying is extremely rare; records show that any such instances are dealt with appropriately both in the school and boarding provision. This view is supported by the students themselves. Staff devote a great deal of time to helping students listen carefully to instructions and respond to the feelings of others.

Leadership and management

The Principal sets high expectations for staff and students. He is very well supported by the deputy principal and the newly appointed business manager and they make a significant impact on the work of the school. The policies and strategies that they have introduced are having a very positive and immediate effect on improving students' performance particularly in the main school. As yet, these are not as well embedded in the sixth form. The emphasis they place on the professional development of staff expertise ensures a cycle of improvement in classroom practice and an enthusiasm from staff about improving the way they meet students' needs, particularly in the main school. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning ensures that performance management is effective.

At present the curriculum is good and ensures systematic development of students' basic skills. It is broad and balanced and meets students' needs well overall, although in the sixth form changes to the grouping arrangements based on need rather than age have not yet been implemented fully. The very wide range of opportunities provided through the lunchtime enrichment activities and the after-school clubs and activities run through the boarding provision are easily accessible to all students. These aspects of the curriculum in particular are very effective in promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The annual school camp and trips abroad are highlights in the school year and are much appreciated by parents and carers and the students themselves. The breadth of these activities and their accessibility demonstrate that the principles of equality of

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opportunity and tackling discrimination are at the heart of everything the school does. As a result, all groups of pupils achieve equally well.

The governing body challenges the school effectively and ensures that policies and procedures, including those relating to safeguarding, are of the highest quality and have a positive impact on school life. For example, risk assessments are exemplary and those for the annual camp and visits abroad are used as exemplars of best practice by the borough.

The school is highly successful in using the strong partnerships through its performing arts specialism to provide regular opportunities for students to perform in public. These are extremely valuable in raising the confidence and self-esteem of students. Such developments linked with the improvements to teaching and learning, the successful development of the boarding provision and improved outcomes for students show that the school has a strong capacity to improve further.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons, and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

21 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Parkwood Hall School, Swanley BR8 8DR

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we came to inspect your school. We were particularly pleased to be able to talk to so many of you and I really enjoyed my visit to your residential camp.

We judge Parkwood Hall to be a good school and the way staff look after you is impressive. The school provides you with some unique opportunities, for example the annual camp and the trips to Disneyland, Paris. Many of you told me that on camp the zip wire, grass sledging and the climbing wall were special highlights. Your behaviour is outstanding and we could see how everyone helps you so that you achieve well and make good progress. Staff are extremely effective in helping you to develop communication and numeracy skills which you can use in your learning. The school provides a very safe and secure environment, and you help and support each other extremely well.

To make Parkwood Hall even better we have asked staff to make sure they always use information about your progress in their lesson planning so that each one of you benefits from the activities in every lesson. We also want the planned changes to the way in which you are looked after and helped in the sixth form to be implemented as quickly as possible.

I know that you will do your best at all times both in lessons and, for those of you who board, when you are taking part in your House activities.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Charlton
Lead inspector

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