

Park School

18 Spa Road, Bolton, Lancashire, BL1 4AG

Inspection dates

5–6 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students' achievement is good. From low starting points and with barriers to overcome almost all progress to further education or training when they leave.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Students feel very safe because of the care and support they receive at the school and alternative provisions. As a result attendance improves rapidly and they develop positive attitudes to work.
- Most students make good progress from their starting points at the school. All achieve qualifications in English and mathematics, with some gaining GCSE passes.
- Students make outstanding progress in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Teaching is good and students benefit from some lessons that are outstanding.
- The headteacher provides calm and purposeful leadership supported by highly effective partnerships with the local authority, parents and other service providers.
- Parents say their child's attendance, behaviour, attitudes and range of interests all improve as a result of attending the school.
- The school's evaluation of its own performance is accurate, and comprehensive plans provide a strong base to support further improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to ensure learning activities are totally matched to each individual student's needs.
- Systems to support and challenge leaders are not fully in place because the planned re-structure of the management committee, acting on behalf of the local authority, is only partially completed.
- The performance of different groups of students is not routinely analysed to check that the work of the school has been effective.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons taught by teachers at the school, a visiting professional and at the Wildlife Trust. All the teachers at the school were observed.
- Meetings or telephone conversations were held with members of the school leadership team, a representative of the local authority, a member of the management committee and a number of professionals who provide support to students and families in the school or through outreach work.
- Discussions were held with staff at the alternative provider centres.
- The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including those concerning safeguarding, records of behaviour and attendance, information on students' progress, staff planning, monitoring documentation and students' work.
- Informal discussions were held with students at the school and at two of the alternative providers (Harmony Youth Project and Wildlife Trust).
- Students were observed reading in lessons.
- The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at students' work and information on their progress; safeguarding information and other documents were evaluated.
- There were insufficient responses from parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) to trigger an analysis. Consequently, the views of four parents who made contact with the inspectors during the inspection and the school's own parental questionnaires were also taken into account. Responses from seven questionnaires completed by staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Keith Massett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is located in a small section of Bolton Lads and Girls Club.
- Students are placed in the school due to a broad range of complex psychological, behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Most have severe social anxieties and Child and Mental Health Services involvement. Two have a statement of special educational needs.
- Many students have experienced considerable periods of time out of school, or have had exceptionally low attendance at their school before joining the PRU.
- Most students remain on the register of their mainstream school.
- New entry procedures are in place and students build up to full-time attendance at the school.
- There are slightly more girls than boys. All students currently at the school are of White British origin.
- A high proportion of students are in their final year of school.
- A small proportion of students are eligible for pupil-premium funding, which is extra funding from the government for those in local authority care or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- There are opportunities for students to work with alternative providers to gain experience of practical subjects and the world of work. The school has strong links with Bolton Wise, Harmony Youth Project, Wildlife Trust and Bolton College. However, there are no students currently attending Bolton College.
- The average length of stay at the school is 22 months but there are considerable variations depending on individual needs.
- All students have a personalised learning programme which supports a multi-agency approach to meeting their medical and educational needs.
- The local authority has undertaken a review of pupil referral provision, as part of a remodelling of the service within the authority. There have been significant changes to the leadership and staffing at the school since the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more learners make outstanding progress by ensuring:
 - staff consistently use all the available assessment information to closely match work to the academic needs of each individual student
 - staff closely monitor, manage and can evidence the academic progress of groups as well as individuals for which they are responsible.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - completing the re-constitution of the management committee and establishing systems to ensure they play a key role in strategic decision making, monitoring, evaluation and holding leaders to account
 - providing more opportunities for leaders and managers to work collaboratively and share best practice.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment levels on entry to the school vary but are generally much lower than would be expected, often due to considerable periods of absence from mainstream schools.
- Students make rapid gains in their personal, social and emotional development enabling many to successfully re-engage with education and slowly but securely with wider society. One parent commented that the improvement in her daughter's attitude to school was, 'a miracle'.
- As students gain in confidence, self-esteem and their social skills improve, their attendance returns to near expected levels and the pace of learning and progress also increases. The school is successful in promoting equal opportunities for all groups of students. Academic progress is good overall and sometimes outstanding, so that many begin to make up the ground they have lost.
- All students leave with a qualification in English and mathematics and a few achieve GCSE grades. Students also gain appropriate awards in other subjects and from vocational courses.
- Records show that all Year 11 students who left school last summer had confirmed places for college courses and training. Almost all successfully took up these places and this shows that the school is successful in preparing students for continuing their education.
- Progress observed during the inspection in lessons, in students' books and at the Harmony Youth Project and Wildlife Trust alternative providers was consistently good.
- Student progress in English and mathematics are similar overall. This includes boys, girls, those with a statement of special educational need or looked after by the local authority, those receiving the pupil-premium funding including those eligible for free school meals.
- For a very small minority of students the pace of learning is slower as they attempt to overcome on-going psychological, social and emotional difficulties.
- Students read regularly and many who are identified for additional individual support make significant gains in reading and spelling. Students' confidence to read aloud, practise writing skills and particularly to overcome anxieties about extended pieces of writing takes longer to achieve.
- Achievement is not outstanding because not enough students make exceptional progress in order to apply their skills in different situations.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and students benefit from some lessons that are outstanding.
- Staff set high expectations and develop positive relationships with students. They are highly skilled at delivering activities that address anxieties and develop social skills. Students, in turn, grow in their self-esteem and confidence.
- Staff are knowledgeable about the students in their care and the subjects they teach. Teachers work in highly effective partnership with mentors and other professionals to engage and enthuse students. This enables most to quickly improve their reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills.
- The curriculum and learning activities are adapted to ensure they are usually well matched to students' needs.
- In the best lessons, teachers plan conscientiously and have high expectations of what students can achieve. In such lessons, students are fully engaged because the teachers adapt the activities to meet individuals' learning needs and interests. In an English lesson based on '*Animal Farm*' students looked at propaganda. Additional resources were used to engage one student with a specific interest in politics in the USA. As a result he was able to make excellent progress in the lesson.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is good and enables students to make good progress. However, in some lessons assessment information is not systematically used so that the learning

activities are not always as well matched to the specific academic needs of each individual student. In these lessons they do not make as much progress as they could.

- Teachers routinely gather evidence in order to evaluate the academic progress of individual students but not for different groups for which they are responsible.
- Literacy development is enhanced by support for individual students for reading and spelling. All staff also use every opportunity to engage students in conversation. Breaks and lunchtimes are used to explore interests and to discuss a wide range of topics. The inspector witnessed a range of conversations covering recipe planning, comic books and the meaning of dreams.
- Students told the inspectors how they enjoyed opportunities for visits. One student told how he had gained confidence to visit art galleries and how this will support his GCSE art work. Others were particularly looking forward to their visit to China Town in Manchester.
- Students also enjoy the vocational experiences. These offer high quality learning experiences in a range of areas such as catering, media and hairdressing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- All students demonstrate high quality behaviour in lessons and around the school. Outstanding behaviour was also seen during visits to the Harmony Youth Project and the Wildlife Trust.
- School provides a safe environment and students say they do not experience the behaviour and bullying that has contributed to many of their anxieties and their previous non-attendance. They are fully aware of the different types of bullying and especially how to deal with bullying related to social media. Parents supported this view.
- Students form positive relationships with staff and they respond well to the high expectations of the staff, who create the calm, nurturing and purposeful approach.
- Students follow an individually planned transition programme that enables them to settle into well-established routines. Parents speak highly of this approach and say it is a key factor in their child's success at school.
- Students are unanimous in stating that they feel safe and well supported.
- Multi-agency involvement is an important part of individual support programmes that ensure a coordinated approach with families.
- Attitudes and behaviour change at different rates as students manage their medical conditions and settle into the school. Parents speak about significant changes at home and one parent described the impact of attending the school as, 'life changing'.
- Students said they each had key adults they speak with and that any concerns are dealt with seriously, thoroughly and in confidence.
- Attendance and punctuality improve rapidly as the students gain in confidence and their medical and academic needs are met. Many students previously had zero attendance at school, sometimes for a number of years. Improvements during the year increase attendance to much closer to national average. Medical conditions affect overall figures but most students attend whenever they are able.
- There have been no fixed-term or permanent exclusions from the school.
- New referral processes, admission arrangements and exit procedures provide further support and better safeguarding. The outreach team provide high quality support for students, their families and schools during these key times.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides calm, purposeful leadership to a strong team of staff who share her high expectations of everyone involved with the school. There is a strong strategic drive for improvement in all aspects of their work. Self-evaluation is accurate and leaders know the relative strengths and weaknesses of their school.
- The partnership between the headteacher and staff is a key factor in achieving successful

outcomes for the students and their families. They are very effectively supported by the head of service who is leading the re-structure of the pupil referral centres.

- Partnerships with parents and other agencies such as Child and Mental Health Services and Connexions are highly effective.
- The restructure of the pupil referral service has recently provided more opportunities for collaborative work between the different centres. Staff say this is leading to better provision and they would welcome more opportunities to share best practice.
- The school provides a calm environment where students feel valued. All students are given equal opportunities to learn, improve their personal development and enjoy the wide range of activities.
- Leaders regularly check teachers' work, through formal observations and spending time in classrooms and around the school. This information is used to inform decisions about teachers' performance, target-setting and pay.
- Training for staff in meeting students' medical needs, safeguarding and profiling has been successful. It has contributed significantly to students' outstanding behaviour and safety.
- Leaders ensure the curriculum and enrichment activities are very effective in engaging students and helping them to improve their skills. The curriculum plays a significant role in helping them to keep safe and in their personal, moral, social and cultural development. Vocational experiences play a significant role in preparing students for their next steps when they leave.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee have effectively supported the school throughout a lengthy and unsettling period of review by the local authority and significant staff changes. Regular meetings enable them to receive key information from the headteacher and local authority on the school's work, including teaching and students' performance. They have taken an active part in the review consultation process. Detailed plans to re-constitute the management committee to serve referral provisions across the authority and establish sub-committees with a clear strategic focus are not yet in place. As a result the committee is not as rigorous as it could be in strategic decision making, monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work and holding leaders to account. Recent new appointments to the committee have improved its capacity to support and implement further planned changes. The committee have ensured that issues identified during the last inspection have improved. The management committee fully meet its statutory duties in regard to safeguarding and ensuring the safety of students. It ensures that safeguarding is given the highest priority and child-protection procedures are exemplary.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105146
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	402969

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	19
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Alan Walsh
Headteacher	Anke Harris
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2007
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