

The Park Community School

Park Lane, Barnstaple, North Devon, EX32 9AX

Inspection dates 4–5 June 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | 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

- Improvements in both achievement and in teaching and learning have been rapid and sustained. These improvements have been driven by the headteacher's clear vision, which is shared by all leaders.
- Data on pupil progress and students' work show that attainment has risen again this year for all groups of students, extending the significant improvements made by students over the last two years.
- Despite recent changes to the senior leadership team, the drive towards further improvement is relentless and is supported by skilled leaders at all levels and by a strong governing body.
- Effective support for less confident teachers has eliminated inadequate teaching.
- Well-structured professional development has increased the proportion of outstanding teaching across a range of subjects.
- Robust systems decide progression through teachers' pay scales.
- Teachers use student progress data well to challenge students and meet their widely varying needs.
- Both students and parents feel that behaviour and safety are excellent and exemplary behaviour often characterises the school environment.
- Students express admirable loyalty to the school and are proud of its traditions. The school's house system very effectively supports both students' academic progress and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Leaders are not expecting staff to strive for rapid enough rates of progress which would lead to outstanding achievement by students.
- Teachers' marking does not engage students in a dialogue in enough subjects or expect students to show teachers how they have improved their work following the marking.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 43 lessons, 15 of which were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- They made shorter visits to lessons to look at how well teachers mark students' work and to examine the quality of literacy teaching across the curriculum. The headteacher joined this activity.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, staff, a local authority representative and three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- They considered the views of parents (173 responses to the on-line questionnaire Parent View) and also the views of 65 staff through a staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors talked to students in lessons, around the school and through more formal meetings with students from Years 7, 9 and 11.
- They looked at key documents including the school's own self-evaluation, assessment data used to monitor students' standards, records of the school's monitoring of the quality of teaching, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding documents and minutes of governors' meetings.
- Information about teachers' professional development was also examined.

Inspection team

Paul Garvey, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Marian Marks

Additional Inspector

Catherine Slater

Additional Inspector

Malcolm Davison

Additional Inspector

Marion Hobbs

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Park Community School is a larger-than-average-sized school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of students who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties make up the greatest proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs.
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- A few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students who are eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, for students known to be eligible for free school meals and students whose parents serve in the armed forces) is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school has formed a cooperative trust with a range of partners including the local authority.
- Early entry for GCSE examinations takes place in core science and for some students in mathematics in Year 10, and through modular entries in geography, history, religious studies short course and sociology at various times in Year 10 and Year 11.
- A small number of students attend off-site provision, mainly at Petroc College.
- To replace two senior leaders who left at Easter 2013, an assistant headteacher was appointed and four existing middle leaders were promoted to the leadership team.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure the full effectiveness of written feedback by making sure that teachers give structured opportunities for students to respond to marking.
- Ensure that expectations for students' progress, communicated to teaching staff by leaders at all levels, are high enough to lead to outstanding achievement for all groups of students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Rates of students' progress have improved rapidly and significantly over the last three years to levels which now compare favourably with national expectations.
- Attainment has shown a consistent improvement over the last three years. Analysis of GCSE early-entry examination results in a range of subjects and consideration of students' work in books show that students are on track to attain an above-average percentage of five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, than would be expected nationally, across a range of subjects in the current year. Nevertheless, not all students necessarily gain the highest grades of which they are capable when taking examinations earlier than at the standard time.
- Achievement is not outstanding because the expectations on students have not been high enough for them to achieve outstandingly well. Students have responded very well to the challenges set for them through their target grades and this level of challenge has led to achievement which is good, but not outstanding.
- Students supported by the Year 7 catch-up premium are making good progress and are rapidly improving their literacy and numeracy skills due to the good support that they receive. Students with weaker skills in reading are supported particularly well. Literacy is also promoted well in other subjects and this has contributed to students' rapid progress in English.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar good progress to their peers because their progress is carefully tracked and teachers use key information on specific aspects of their needs and make good use of this in planning lessons.
- The few students who speak English as an additional language achieve well because of good support.
- The pupil premium is used on a variety of activities to benefit eligible students. These include increased staffing in mathematics and English to reduce class sizes, a summer school for targeted students, help with transition from primary schools through the appointment of a transition teaching assistant and an extensive one-to-one mentoring programme. As a result, these students make good progress. In English and mathematics their attainment is half a grade behind other students, but the gaps in their achievement are narrowing in both subjects.
- In 2012, all students gained at least one GCSE qualification and this helped the school to ensure that every student in the cohort went on to college or further education. The school has good links with Petroc College and it uses the college to provide effective alternative provision for a small number of students.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Many subject leaders, particularly in English and mathematics, set an example by teaching outstandingly well. For example, in a Year 8 English class, students were looking at the roles of women in Shakespeare plays. Opportunities for pupil discussion allowed students to explore the views of others. Excellent use of data to set individual targets for students and marking which demanded student responses encouraged them to plan their own routes to achieve their learning goals and thus achieve independence in their learning.
- The best teaching encourages students to display their high levels of social skills, excellent relationships with adults and pride in their work to the full. This was amply demonstrated in a Year 10 science lesson. A class of students with a wide range of learning needs was given the freedom to investigate how olive oil is produced from the fruit. Excellent use of data to plan for individual needs, and then skilful support and care from the teacher and support assistant for every student, brought about rapid progress in an atmosphere of fun and enjoyment. Behaviour and safety were outstanding as a result.
- Teachers provide a range of spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences which strongly support learning. In a Year 7 lesson studying Samba music, students were outstandingly well

engaged in learning about South American culture by having the opportunity to improvise on individual instruments and to lead the whole-class Samba band. A sense of spirituality was encouraged through reflection on, and enjoyment of, the captivating yet unfamiliar rhythms.

- Students' books show that, while marking is regular and often points students to the next steps in their learning, few teachers expect students to respond to their marking. Thus students do not have the opportunity to show their teachers where they have made corrections, or employed the comments teachers had made in improving their next piece of work.
- Tutor time is used exceptionally well to promote learning. In a Year 10 group, students had been drawn from other tutor groups to work with a mathematics teacher on targeted exercises to address individual needs. Students responded outstandingly well to the opportunity and, as a result, progress was rapid.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students say they feel very safe at school and that behaviour is excellent. Almost all parental responses to Parent View show that students are kept safe by the school and parents have very positive views about behaviour in the school.
- In consequence, students attend well and display excellent levels of politeness and friendliness to each other, staff and visitors. Around school, their behaviour is mostly exemplary.
- Students are kept safe by robust safeguarding arrangements and policies and high expectations of the whole school community that all adhere to them. Staff, governors and students are highly aware of unsafe situations and clear on what to do should they encounter one.
- Students say that bullying of all types is extremely rare and that they are well trained in what to do if they are exposed to cyber bullying, gender, or homophobic bullying. Relationships between students and adults are excellent and there are high levels of trust, which allow students to feel confident to approach an adult for help if they have problems.
- Exclusions have fallen over the last three years to below average. Effective use of behaviour management techniques and restorative justice, in which both parties to an incident have their say, has played a key role in this reduction. Students say that isolated instances of poor behaviour are dealt with well by adults.
- Students take immense pride in their school and will readily talk about their enjoyment of school life to visitors. The house system, with several members of the same family having been members of the same house, is well respected and liked. House assemblies support these traditions and also build new spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences. For instance, students listened to a song that a student had composed in his first language to enter in a national languages competition.
- Students respond well to all levels of challenge offered to them in lessons and rarely misbehave. When teachers' expectations of them are at their highest, students invariably respond with outstanding interest, engagement and behaviour. In these lessons, they show high levels of independent and cooperative learning skills, listening extremely well to each other's contributions and to their teachers.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and managers at all levels share the clear vision for the future set out cohesively by the headteacher. Together with his governing body, which gives valuable challenge and advice, the headteacher has made sure that the school has continued to forge forward, despite recent and significant changes to the senior leadership team.
- Teaching has improved over time due to an effective programme of professional development. There is good support from leaders for teachers whose practice is not up to that of the best. In joint lesson observations, school leaders showed good skills in determining the quality of

teaching. The school's own effective monitoring shows that the quality of teaching has improved year on year for three years and the school requires teachers to demonstrate consistently good or better teaching to be able to progress up the pay scale.

- The school operates what it describes as a 'traditional' curriculum, deliberately built around GCSEs. Leaders keep a keen eye on future developments and the curriculum has enabled students at The Park Community School to progress well. The appointment of very effective leaders in English and mathematics has been key to accelerating student progress.
 - Corridors are decorated with photographs and displays showing students enjoying the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer. These enhance the curriculum well. One example is the annual Year 10 expressive arts visit to London, which is much enjoyed by students who experience a range of cultural and spiritual experiences through visits to galleries and West End shows. Behaviour on these trips is unfailingly excellent, due to the strong moral lead and the high levels of care provided by staff.
 - The school has partnerships with a range of organisations, including close relations with its feeder primary schools. This enables a smooth transition into Year 7. This is aided by the excellent moral and social skills that students routinely display. A Year 7 pupil spoke of coming to the school, 'It was big, but I'd been here in Year 6 and I just asked people; the older ones always helped.'
 - Parents are encouraged to take an active part in school life through school-parent partnership organisations. These have developed to the point where parents can challenge the school and augment planning. An example of this is where parents recently contacted their local Member of Parliament to discuss National Curriculum changes which may have an effect on the school.
 - The school works hard to ensure that all students have equal opportunities. There is no discrimination. Support is given to the very few students who enter speaking English as an additional language to see that they make good progress.
 - The local authority provides light touch support for this good school.
 - Leaders have made sure that literacy is promoted well, especially among the many students who enter the school with reading ages below their chronological age. In a lesson helping weaker readers with their reading skills in Year 7, high expectations, skilful questioning and a brisk pace meant that all students made rapid progress. Literacy is also well promoted through displays in many subject areas and in a well-resourced learning support centre.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very actively involved in making sure that the school improves. They monitor its work closely and their excellent understanding of data and students' achievement allows them to challenge and support senior leaders in equal measure. They know staff well and understand the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching through observing the departments to which they are linked. This good knowledge enables governors to ask challenging questions concerning pay progression for staff. They understand how the school manages the performance of its staff, rewards good teaching and tackles any underperformance. Governors are also knowledgeable about school finances and, together with the headteacher and school business manager, they have tight control over budgets, which has allowed them to avoid the need for redundancies despite a falling roll. They have monitored the spending of the pupil premium closely and are aware of its positive effects on the progress of students. An area where governors' influence was felt was in the ultimately successful shared appointment for head of mathematics. They recognised that the two candidates would work extremely well together and so it has proved to the benefit of students.
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What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 113514 |
| Local authority | Devon |
| Inspection number | 412803 |

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

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| Type of school | Comprehensive |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1371 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mike Canham |
| Headteacher | David Atton |
| Date of previous school inspection | 7–8 October 2009 |
| Telephone number | 01271 373131 |
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