

Knowsley Park School

Knowsley Park Lane, Prescot, Merseyside, L34 3NB

Inspection dates

3–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough students have achieved the standards of which they are capable in mathematics and history over the last two years.
- A small minority of the most able students, and disadvantaged students supported by pupil premium funding, are making slower progress than they should.
- Teaching has not been consistently good over time so students have not developed a good understanding of what is being taught. As a result, teaching requires improvement, particularly in history.
- Teachers do not always ask questions that make students explain what they know or describe clearly what they understand.
- Not all subject leaders have checked that teaching in their subject is good enough, or taken steps to make sure teaching is helping students to progress in their learning, particularly in history.
- In 2014, the progress of some students, and the standards they reached, were limited because they arrived at the school in Year 11 and took time to settle into their learning.
- Senior leaders, managers and governors have only recently taken decisive and effective steps to improve teaching in geography, mathematics and history.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is rapidly improving in mathematics and geography. Students are making much faster progress and attainment is rising quickly
- Leaders and managers check students' progress rigorously and regularly, so students who fall behind receive extra teaching to ensure they catch up.
- Senior leaders, managers and governors have improved the accuracy with which the quality of teaching is checked, so students are making better progress as a result of better teaching.
- The majority of students make good progress and achieve well in English, modern foreign languages and physical education.
- Students behave well around school and in lessons. They feel safe and enjoy coming to school.
- Actions taken by leaders, managers and governors have been successful in enabling students newly arrived at the school to settle quickly and achieve well in English and in modern foreign languages.
- Students with disabilities or special educational needs make good progress as a result of the effective specialist support they receive, particularly to improve their literacy skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors saw 36 teaching sessions or parts of sessions, involving 35 teachers. Four sessions were seen jointly by inspectors and senior leaders.
- Inspectors met formally with groups of students and talked informally to students in lessons and around the school.
- They also discussed the school’s work with the headteacher, senior leaders and pastoral and subject leaders and the special needs coordinator. Inspectors also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and the vice-chair, the Chair of the Finance Committee and a staff governor, and representatives from the local authority. An inspector spoke on the telephone with the executive headteacher of a partner school, Great Sankey High School, who is also a National Leader in Education. An inspector also talked to the school's police safer schools officer.
- There were insufficient responses to register on the online questionnaire, Parent View. However, inspectors took into account the school’s surveys of the views of parents and of students.
- Inspectors considered the views of 26 teachers and support staff who responded to a questionnaire distributed by the school.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school, including students’ written work in their books, and the school’s records of students’ progress and attainment. They also looked at minutes of governing body meetings, reports from the local authority and Her Majesty’s Inspectors the school’s evaluation of its work and the plans made to improve the school. Inspectors also looked closely at records in relation to safeguarding, child protection, attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Nell Banfield, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Steven Baker	Additional Inspector
Bimla Kumari	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Knowsley Park School is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students with disabilities or special educational needs is much higher than that found nationally.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by pupil premium funding (additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children that are looked after) is twice the national average.
- Most students are of White British heritage. Very few students are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets out the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of students from Year 10 and 11 attend courses away from the school site in English, mathematics and vocational subjects at Evolve, Skillbridge, SALT Merseyside, Molden Training, JMH and MV.
- In 2013, the school admitted a large number of students into Key Stage 4 from a local school which closed.
- The school works with a range of teaching school partners, Bishop Rawthorne Church of England Academy and Great Sankey High School, to ensure standards improve rapidly. It also has links with an outstanding sixth form college, Carmel College, to support smooth transition for students from Year 11 to Year 12.
- The school benefits from Endowment Trustees who support both the school and individuals by providing additional resources, sponsorship and funding for a range of activities before and after the school day. This includes a house in North Wales, Tan-y-Graig, which provides residential opportunities for students in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more teaching promotes better progress, particularly in history, by:
 - ensuring teachers have consistently high expectations of progress across all subjects, particularly for the most able students and disadvantaged students supported by pupil premium funding
 - making sure students understand the ideas and concepts behind the topics being taught, so they can apply their understanding to more complex topics
 - ensuring teachers plan tasks and activities so that all students are working on assignments and topics that are closely matched to their stage in learning.
- Improve the consistency with which all subject leaders monitor and check students' progress as a result of teaching, so they know where teaching needs to improve, especially in history.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, governors, senior leaders and most subject and pastoral leaders, are determined to improve the progress of students in the school and the standards they reach by the time they leave. Leaders, managers and governors took decisive steps in 2014 to appoint two highly skilled practitioners to improve teaching in mathematics, and more students are now achieving higher standards and making faster progress in this subject. Attainment remains below average in history and actions are now being taken to improve teaching so students' achievement improves. Attainment is improving in geography as a result of better teaching.
- Leaders and managers have identified accurately where teaching needs to improve across the school and have provided well-tailored support for these areas. They have also challenged and supported subject leaders to improve teaching in their subject. Most subject leaders now identify where teaching is strong and share the strengths within their subject. All teachers are set objectives which closely match the areas of teaching that need to improve.
- Subject and pastoral leaders understand and share the school's priorities. Staff unanimously expressed, in the school's questionnaire, a clear commitment to improve the school further. Pastoral leaders have worked with other agencies and families to reduce the number of students excluded from the school and have steadily increased attendance so it is now very close to national averages. There are clear systems for subject leaders to check the quality of teaching in their subjects but these are not yet used consistently effectively by all leaders, particularly in history.
- Senior leaders have sought effective support from local, high-achieving schools and colleges to speed up the impact of actions taken to improve provision. For example, most leaders now monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching more accurately by checking the progress students make in lessons. Most leaders then compare this progress with the standards achieved by students in their written work, and talk to students about what they have done in lessons, to make sure learning is secure. However, not all subject leaders have adopted this approach and so do not have a clear picture of the rates of progress students make.
- The school's assessments of the standards students reach have been checked with the partner schools to make sure the figures are accurate. The school has also improved the rigour with which individual progress is measured over time, so when a student falls behind, additional support quickly helps them to regain lost ground.
- The achievement of the most able students, and of disadvantaged students, although improved overall since 2012, has not improved rapidly enough. There is not enough emphasis on the achievement of these groups of students in all subjects. This limits the school's success in promoting equality of opportunity.
- The school overall has used additional pupil premium funding well to provide disadvantaged students with additional teaching and experiences such as theatre trips, and some have increased their progress because of this.
- The curriculum includes many and varied opportunities in lessons, in assemblies and form times, in events and trips, to develop students' understanding of different life styles and beliefs. As a result students work together well and relationships in school are harmonious. Formal debates are held where students can explore what it means to be British and discuss other cultures' values, traditions and ways of living. As a result students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is a strength. Younger students study a good range of subjects. Older students can choose courses, in addition to the main subjects of English, mathematics and science, that give them a balance of academic and vocational subjects.
- All students are well supported in deciding which subjects they need to study as they move up the school and how these link to the future choices they might make. The school was particularly conscientious in checking the subject choices made by the students who arrived in Year 11 in 2013.
- The local authority has supported the school well in evaluating the quality of education it is providing for students and in improving attendance.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements and are effective in ensuring the safety of students and staff.
- Students following courses away from the school site make good progress because the subjects they study appeal to their interests and talents and because their progress and attendance is closely monitored.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have been well supported by a National Leader for Governance, by training from the local authority and from Her Majesty's Inspectors to understand the school's data. As a result they now can question the headteacher and senior and subject leaders about improvements and about the steps that

need to be taken to improve further. Governors know how additional funding, such as pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding, is spent, and know how the school measures its impact on the progress and standards of disadvantaged students. They are aware that the impact on the progress of disadvantaged students has been variable. Governors have successfully removed the deficit from the school budget and the budget is now balanced. They have supported the school well in putting systems in place to manage the performance of teachers and all objectives set for teachers link with students' progress and learning. They know that strong teaching across the school is the key to further improvement. Governors know how and where teaching has improved and are fully aware of the subjects where improvement still needs to take place. A governing body scrutiny panel, established in 2013, has given them a forum for improving their knowledge and understanding of the quality of teaching and student progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. This is so around school and in lessons. They take pride in their school building and help to maintain tidy classrooms. Most wear their uniform well so they look smart and ready to learn. They are polite to visitors and show respect to staff and their peers. They work very well together in class and feel that staff enjoy teaching them.
- The number of students excluded from school for poor behaviour has reduced steadily both overall and for groups that previously were excluded more frequently than the main body of students in the school. Attendance has also risen as a result of a myriad of actions taken to recognise and reward students who improve their attendance, and actions taken to support families whose children were not attending well. Attendance levels are now closer to national averages and fewer students are persistently absent.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe and well supervised in and around school. Parents and staff agree in questionnaires that students are safe and well cared for. The school works closely with a range of agencies and the police safer schools officer to make sure that any conflict between students is constructively resolved.
- Students say bullying is very rare and that if any happens they would help each other to talk to a member of staff; they feel sure they would get the help and support they need. They describe how the school helps to keep them safe through assemblies, in form-time discussions and in personal development sessions where staff explain the risks associated with social networking sites and how mobile phones can be used to intimidate or pressurise individuals into behaving in a way they know is unsafe.
- The behaviour of students following courses away from the school site is monitored closely and there is regular and effective communication between the school and the course providers to make sure students are safe, including in travelling to and from the course venues.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because although students make consistently good progress in English, modern foreign languages and physical education, not enough students make swift progress in mathematics and history.
- The most able students are sometimes given work in a subject that requires them to gather and collate information so they gain knowledge, but does not require them to explain what they now know, ask questions about what intrigues them, or dig any deeper to discover additional facts.
- Although some disadvantaged students are making better progress, not all teachers are providing them with work which is matched to the stage they are at in their learning, so they sometimes complete it too easily or do not understand it fully and so do not make the progress they are capable of. The progress in the written work of disadvantaged students is variable, in that some books contain untidy work or shorter pieces of work, whereas others show real effort and a good response to suggestions made by the teacher about how they can improve.
- Teaching has improved in mathematics since September 2014 but some teaching remains where opportunities are lost to give students work that develops their understanding, and where work is challenging enough to move them on to the next stage in their learning. Students are sometimes taught a process or a calculation and are given the opportunity to practise it, but they are not always given opportunities to apply the process so they can understand how they can use it to solve problems. As a result some students do not develop secure understanding of mathematical processes.

- However, some well planned teaching makes students think hard and use what they know in new situations. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson, students were highly challenged by a question about the percentage difference in size between two circles with different diameters. They worked together well to discuss what might work, tried out their ideas and were highly engaged in finding the solution. They developed their understanding of calculations relating to circles and percentages effectively as a result.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding has enabled the school to provide all Year 7 and 8 students with regular practice in their reading so they can understand reading material used in lessons and their learning has improved as a result. The school is beginning to implement steps to improve mathematics across subjects in order to strengthen the improvement in learning in the subject for all students.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly in most subjects, and most teachers give students clear guidance as to what they have done well and what they need to do to improve further. Students spoken to said teacher's suggestions about what they need to practice were very helpful in helping them to improve.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Despite standards improving, and students' progress increasing steadily in most subjects, especially in English, science, physical education and languages, standards achieved by students in mathematics remain below national averages. Attainment in history and geography also remains below national standards. Therefore achievement requires improvement.
- Students arrive at the school working at standards broadly in line with national averages. However, towards the end of 2013, a large number of students joined the school in Year 11 from a local school that had closed, many of whom were working at lower standards than those found nationally. More than three-quarters of students in this group were disadvantaged students. Many needed a significant amount of individual support in order to succeed. The school worked hard to ensure all students, including the recently arrived students, made the best progress they could in Year 11 by providing additional teaching and support, paid for mainly by additional pupil premium funding. A higher proportion of this group of students achieved national standards and made faster rates of progress in English and in languages than were predicted to do when they first arrived. However, these students did not achieve highly enough in mathematics.
- The achievement of the most able students has improved slowly over the last three years. However, the improvements have not happened rapidly enough for the majority of the most able students to achieve the standards they are capable of. This is because not enough teachers have provided work that has been sufficiently challenging. As a result, students have not had enough opportunity to apply their learning to a wider range of more complex situations, nor have students been questioned closely so they have to think hard and explain what they know.
- The achievement and progress of disadvantaged students supported by pupil premium funding has been variable because expectations have not been high enough. Not all teachers have been aware of the standards that these students are capable of reaching and have not planned teaching accordingly.
- On average, in 2013, disadvantaged students attained a full GCSE grade lower in English and a GCSE grade-and-a-half lower in mathematics, than other students in the school. They gained almost a GCSE grade lower in English and one-and-a-half GCSE grades lower in mathematics, than non-disadvantaged students nationally.
- The decline in standards in mathematics seen in 2014 has been halted. As a result of improvements in teaching, in mathematics and in other subjects such as geography since September 2014, students, including the most able students and disadvantaged students, are now making faster progress. The school's assessments, checked with other teachers in the school, and in the partner schools, indicate standards are likely to rise in 2015.
- Students with disabilities or special educational needs make good progress from their starting points as a result of the effective support offered by most teaching assistants and specialist teachers. A parent spoken to was full of praise for the support from the staff. There were other parents who expressed appreciation of the efforts of staff to ensure that students with additional needs make good progress.
- Students are to be entered early for the examination in humanities for this academic year so they can become accustomed to answering the examination questions and gain higher grades in the future.
- The progress of students who follow courses away from the school site is good. All gain qualifications, in either GCSE or GCSE equivalent courses, in English and mathematics.

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	135477
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	442408

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	885
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Rimmer
Headteacher	Judith Walker
Date of previous school inspection	13 February 2013
Telephone number	0151 477 8680
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