

Parkside House School

Station Road, Backworth, North Tyneside, Tyne and Wear, NE27 0AB

Inspection dates 28–30 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- Pupils who enter the school with low levels of attainment make good progress as a result of good, highly individualised teaching.
- Pupils with significant behavioural difficulties who have failed in their previous schools now behave well and work hard in lessons. The school provides a safe and secure environment for learning.
- Pupils in the sixth form are offered a range of educational and vocational opportunities well matched to their needs. As a result, they make good progress.
- Leadership and management are good. Leaders have created a strong sense of purpose which is shared by staff and pupils. They ensure that the quality of teaching is good and that pupils achieve well.
- Pupils leave school with a range of academic and vocational qualifications which prepare them well for their futures.
- Senior leaders have ensured that previously unmet regulations are now all met.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The school does not have a consistent approach to the marking of pupils' work. Consequently, pupils are not always given sufficient guidance on how to improve their work.
- Absences and exclusions are not analysed closely to identify patterns and enable preventive action to be taken.
- Achievement is not tracked centrally in a way that gives a clear picture of all pupils' progress over time across all subjects.
- Arrangements for the provision of careers advice for pupils are not sufficiently secure.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector spoke to pupils and staff and met with the proprietor. He visited an alternative education provider used by the school and spoke by telephone to an officer of a local authority placing pupils in the school.
- The inspector observed pupils' learning in a number of subjects. He examined samples of pupils' work and the school's records of pupils' behaviour and achievement. He scrutinised school policies, subject documents and staff records to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspector considered the responses to eight surveys completed by members of staff. There were no responses to the Parent View online survey or to questionnaires sent to local authorities placing pupils in the school.

Inspection team

Michael Glickman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Parkside House School is a special school for pupils with significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is located in converted farm buildings on the outskirts of Backworth, North Tyneside.
- The school is registered for 25 pupils aged 11 to 19 years. There are currently 24 pupils on the roll, five of whom are in the sixth form. All pupils have statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans. Five are looked after by their local authorities. No pupil has a disability.
- The school aims to 'provide a high quality education package to pupils who have difficulty in relating to education or others within a mainstream setting.'
- The school uses Northumbria Youth Action, Barnardo's and NACRO as alternative education providers.
- The school opened in January 1994. It was last inspected in March 2012, when it was judged to provide a good standard of education. At that time, the school failed to meet three regulations relating to premises and the provision of information to parents.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Introduce a uniform marking policy across the school to ensure that pupils receive clear guidance on what they need to do to improve in all subjects.
- Implement a single centralised tracking system for pupil attainment to enable accurate identification of where further support is needed to help pupils achieve even better.
- Analyse exclusions and absences to identify patterns and take appropriate action to reduce them.
- Work effectively with outside agencies to provide consistent high-quality careers guidance throughout the school and particularly in the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and managers have created a strong sense of identity within the school. Pupils feel proud of the school and requested the introduction of a school uniform. Staff and pupils share a clear sense of purpose and as a result both teaching and behaviour are good. Pupils achieve well, including in literacy and numeracy.
- The headteacher carries out regular lesson observations to monitor the quality of teaching and members of staff also observe one another's lessons. This has improved teaching by identifying and sharing good practice. Pay increments and incentives are linked to teacher performance and have proved effective in promoting good teaching.
- The school has recently designated a senior lead teacher as a middle manager. She also fulfils responsibility for safeguarding within the school to a high standard. She has supported other members of staff effectively in developing their ideas for improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They learn about the democratic process and recently carried out a mock election to choose a school council. Pupils have improved their knowledge of local services, for example by meeting with local police officers and firefighters and by visiting the neighbouring ambulance station.
- The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school raises funds for charity. Pupils have helped at a charity which distributes books to refuges and hostels. They learn about other faiths and cultures and have visited several places of worship.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity effectively for all pupils and ensures that there is no discrimination. It ensures that pupils are not exposed to extremist views in class or on out-of-school activities.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements. Senior staff have carried out all the required checks on staff and have recorded these in a single central register. Staff, including the designated teacher for safeguarding, have received appropriate safeguarding training. They will shortly be attending a course to increase their awareness of the signs of child sexual exploitation.
- The school provides a good balance between academic and vocational courses. Staff liaise closely with alternative education providers and colleges to ensure that pupils placed there are well supported. They receive regular reports of progress, attendance and behaviour. The school is informed immediately if there are any problems.
- The school sees parents as partners and works hard to involve them in their children's education. It funds taxis to parents' meetings and as a result has achieved very high attendance figures. Regular newsletters are sent home and staff maintain close contact by telephone, if necessary.
- The school provides all the necessary information to parents, including its safeguarding policy, through its website, as well as in print. It works well with local authorities to complete educational reviews for pupils placed in the school. Its complaints policy meets requirements.
- The school maintains admissions and attendance registers which comply with requirements. However, analysis of absences is insufficiently detailed to enable leaders and managers to easily distinguish between unavoidable absences for medical or professional appointments and illness, or school refusal. It is therefore difficult for them to identify patterns and to take rapid action to improve attendance.
- The school has recently installed a central computer server to hold all subject materials and pupil performance data. This will give all staff full access to teaching resources and is intended to simplify the tracking of pupils' progress. However, the new tracking system does not enable a clear overview of every pupil's progress across all subjects. This makes it difficult for leaders and managers to identify weaknesses in teaching and learning.
- Following the withdrawal of the local authority careers advice service, the school has provided careers advice on an ad hoc basis. Although pupils are still given careers advice, this is less effective than when provided by a dedicated independent professional. The school has not yet identified a suitable replacement service.
- The school is housed in former farm buildings. They have been well converted for school use and are decorated with striking examples of pupils' art work. The grounds include grass and garden areas and pupils are involved in a project to landscape and plant some of these. Physical education is delivered at local leisure centres where there are shower facilities.

■ The governance of the school:

The proprietor, who founded the school, has considerable experience in special school education and

remains closely involved in its running. He and his fellow governors have regular meetings with the headteacher, are kept well informed about teaching and pupils' progress, and hold school leaders appropriately to account.

The governors fulfil their responsibilities for overseeing the work of the headteacher effectively. The headteacher reports to governors on the performance of the rest of the staff.

The Chair of the Governing Body has a good overview of safeguarding and is named as a contact in the school's safeguarding policy.

The proprietor has ensured that the independent school regulations failed at the previous inspection have now been met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Although they exhibited extremely challenging behaviour on entry, they now participate well in lessons, often working at length on individual tasks with considerable concentration. As a result, they make good progress.
- The school uses an incentive and reward system where pupils collect points for good behaviour and work. Pupils say that the system gives them an incentive to behave well.
- All pupils and staff eat lunch together. This not only develops pupils' social skills but also fosters a sense of community which promotes good behaviour at all times, including breaks. Pupils feel loyal to the school and respect its rules and values. They understand clearly the difference between right and wrong and are gaining self-confidence well.
- The school occasionally has to exclude pupils for serious instances of misbehaviour. This is usually at the beginning of the school year when new pupils are placed in the school. The school's analysis of exclusions does not currently allow it to easily identify patterns to put measures in place to reduce instances when exclusion is necessary.
- Although many pupils had poor attendance in their previous schools, their attendance has improved significantly. Attendance is good with the exception of a very small number of persistent absentees.
- Where pupils refuse to attend, the school works closely with parents or carers and placing local authorities to identify the problem and encourage the pupil to return. However, the school does not analyse absences in a way that allows it to distinguish easily between absences for unavoidable medical or professional appointments and other reasons.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are confident that they can approach teachers if they have problems.
- The school has a clear anti-bullying policy and has recently carried out effective work on cyber-bullying, which had been identified as a problem. Pupils say that any bullying which does occur is always dealt with quickly. They are emphatic that homophobic bullying would not be indulged in or tolerated by anyone in the school.
- Pupils are well supervised at all times and are never left unattended. Staff communicate appropriately with each other to ensure that pupils permitted to leave the classroom are closely monitored.
- Full risk assessments have been carried out for all school activities and for visits off-site. Fire safety equipment is professionally inspected and serviced and regular fire drills are carried out.
- Behaviour and safety at alternative education provider sites are good.
- The school meets all regulatory requirements in relation to behaviour and safety well.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have an excellent relationship with their pupils and engage them effectively in learning. Humour is often used effectively to persuade reluctant learners to participate. Their good knowledge of pupils enables teachers to plan lessons at appropriate levels. As a result, pupils make good progress, including in literacy, reading and mathematics.
- Small class sizes enable pupils to receive individual attention and teachers are often teaching at several different levels simultaneously. In practice, this works well, due to good lesson planning and clear

objectives being given to pupils.

- Teachers use their good knowledge of pupils' abilities and interests to plan lessons that engage them well and enable them to make good progress. Where support is necessary, this is provided. For example, some pupils are encouraged to use computers to enable them to overcome difficulties they have in writing.
- The school ensures that pupils are taught subjects which meet the requirements of their statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans. This results in pupils participating well in lessons across all subjects. Teaching is well supported by appropriate resources. Computers are available for pupil use in all classrooms as well as in a fully-equipped computer suite. The art room enables pupils to carry out creative work in a range of media.
- Where pupils have particular interests, they are supported to further their achievement in these areas. For example, the school is using extra funding received from local authorities to construct a darkroom to enable pupils with an interest in photography to carry out A-level projects.
- The school does not have a marking policy. Although all teachers mark pupils' work regularly, there is no consistency between subjects. This means that pupils do not receive a clear picture of what they need to do to improve. Much feedback is given verbally, so pupils do not have a record of what needs to be done.
- The school meets the standards relating to teaching, subjects and personal development well.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The achievement of all groups of pupils across the school is good because they receive highly personalised teaching which addresses their individual needs well. Teachers are able to engage pupils successfully in learning. This results in pupils making good progress from their starting points, including in literacy, numeracy and mathematics.
- Pupils usually enter the school with low levels of attainment, because they have been reluctant to participate in their previous schools. The school quickly assesses their level and places them in the appropriate teaching group. Pupils are now making progress at a rate comparable to their peers nationally.
- As pupils are often placed in the school for short periods, the school tries to ensure that they all leave with a qualification. Pupils are therefore entered for Entry Level qualifications in Year 9. They then follow courses leading to GCSE or Functional Skills certificates as appropriate. Pupils' achievements in these external awards show that they have made good progress in their time at the school.
- The education provided for pupils with special educational needs or education, health and care plans is appropriate. They make comparable progress to other pupils.
- Higher ability pupils benefit from the arrangement of classes according to ability rather than age. They are able to make progress at a more rapid rate. Although the school has not done so yet, it is considering early entry to GCSE for pupils who are capable of it.
- The achievement of pupils attending alternative provision is good.
- The school does not currently have a single system for tracking pupil progress. Teachers maintain their own records and those indicate that pupils make good progress in all subjects. However, although teachers exchange information regularly, there is no unified view of the results. Although a standardised electronic tracking system is being introduced, it still does not enable a clear overview of progress across the school.
- The school meets the standards relating to the learning activities on offer and assessment well.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The school's provision for students in the sixth form is as personalised as in the lower classes. Where students require extra time to take GCSEs, they are placed in the appropriate classes alongside younger pupils. Where they would benefit from college or vocational placements, suitable arrangements are made. Other students are following appropriate A-level courses.
- Leadership and management are good. As a result of good teaching and individualised timetables, students in the sixth form make good progress. Their behaviour is good. Arrangements for safety are good.
- The school liaises closely with alternative education providers to ensure that students are well supported in their placements. As a result, students are confident and are gaining skills and qualifications which will aid them in finding employment.

- Following local government reorganisation, the school no longer benefits from a dedicated careers adviser. Although careers advice is still provided, this is on an ad hoc basis, which limits its effectiveness. Students leaving the school have gone on to take up a range of further education, training and employment opportunities.
- The school meets the standards relating to the sixth form well.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	135001
Inspection number	463009
DfE registration number	392/6011

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	5
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	J Thompson
Chair	K Thompson
Headteacher	Belinda Young
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£27,102–£38,869
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