

The Parks

29a Park Road, Golborne, Wigan WA3 3PU

Inspection dates

22–24 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The proprietor and headteacher have high aspirations for the school and great expectations of pupils. Together with senior leaders, they ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is good and all independent school standards are met.
- Parents and carers are highly complimentary about the school, which they describe as 'accommodating'. Parents are happy with the progress their children make.
- Pupils' attendance rapidly improves after they start school. They benefit from an interesting curriculum which develops their speaking, listening, reading, writing and mathematical skills well. Pupils say they feel safe and that there is no bullying in the school.
- Staff employ a range of strategies which help pupils to manage their emotions and consider the consequences of their actions.
- Teachers' positive relationships with pupils, and good classroom management, support pupils' good engagement and strong progress in learning.
- Social workers, and other local authority representatives, say that the school provides good value for money and communication is good.
- There are few opportunities for pupils to engage in investigative activities in science. Resources in art are somewhat limited.
- Systems for assessing pupils' skills and abilities on entry to the school are accurate, as are procedures for monitoring their progress.
- Teachers and leaders develop pupils' appreciation of British values well and successfully enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Staff morale is exceptionally high. Teachers enjoy working at the school and say they are well supported by senior leaders. However, few opportunities are available for teachers to learn from a broader range of teaching styles.
- The school has expanded quickly. Plans to accredit pupils' work, in subjects such as science and art, are yet to be implemented.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - providing opportunities for pupils to engage in investigative activities in science
 - ensuring that appropriate resources are available to enhance teaching in art.
- Improve the quality of leadership, management and governance by:
 - implementing plans to accredit pupils' work in subjects such as science, art and food technology
 - improving teachers' practice and broadening their skills and experience of different teaching styles.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor is very 'hands on'. He knows the school exceptionally well and has a highly effective partnership with the headteacher. Together, they have high ambitions for the school, staff and pupils. Leaders and teachers are aware of the previous experiences of pupils, many of which have had an adverse impact on pupils' social, emotional and academic development. However, no member of staff makes excuses. Instead, staff seek to understand pupils. This they do, as they form close bonds with pupils and support them in taking tentative steps back into learning.
- Senior leaders, supported by the proprietor, ensure that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are good. They provide a secure and engaging environment where pupils develop their confidence to participate in lessons, share their ideas and alert staff to any concerns. Leaders ensure that stringent safeguarding procedures are in place and adhered to and all independent school standards are met.
- Pupils benefit from an interesting curriculum and learning programmes which are tailored to their individual needs. As a result, they make strong progress in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and history. Pupils' progress in some aspects of science is not as good as in other subjects. This is because few opportunities are available for pupils to engage in investigative activities. Senior leaders are acutely aware of this and have made it a priority area for development.
- The headteacher and senior leaders regularly monitor teachers' practice. They check the quality of work in pupils' books and talk to pupils about their studies. Feedback given to teachers is clear and focused, helping them to improve their effectiveness. Teachers are set challenging improvement targets, all of which are linked to sharpening their practice and raising pupils' achievement.
- Teachers' work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils discuss religion as part of their personal, social, health, and citizenship studies. They celebrate religious festivals, such as Ramadan and Diwali, and have visited various places of worship, including Liverpool's Catholic and Anglican cathedrals. Pupils enjoy going to the cinema, and their many educational visits to destinations such as The International Slavery Museum and The World Museum. As part of their studies of Roman Britain, pupils visited Chester to explore its history. In their 'option time', pupils enjoy playing musical instruments, including the drums and keyboards, and various sports.
- Teachers' work to develop pupils' appreciation of British values is effective. Pupils celebrate important events in British history. They enjoy engaging in lively debates on topical issues, such as Brexit, terrorism, political engagement and crime and punishment. Pupils know that Britain is a culturally diverse country and understand the importance of treating others fairly. All pupils strive to be good citizens. Pupils like to be heard and can air their views through the democratically elected pupils' council. Recently, they voted on whether to have a tuck shop at breaktimes and gave their views on what the shop should sell. Pupils have collected funds for various good causes, including cancer research and various children's charities.
- Representatives from local authorities and social workers are satisfied that pupils settle into The Parks quickly. They say that pupils form close bonds with their peers and staff

and make good progress in their personal, social and academic development. Those who visit the school characterise it as 'calm and purposeful', and indicate that the school successfully ensures the good attendance of pupils who were formerly 'reluctant learners'.

- Parents are often relieved to have found a school where their children are happy and willing to attend. They say that communication with the school is good and indicate that if there are any issues or incidents at school, they are informed immediately. Typically, parents say that 'The school is very approachable.' Parents are of the view that their children are safe and making good progress with their learning and behaviour.
- Staff morale is high. They know exactly what the school is aiming to achieve and say they are 'behind the school 100%'. Teachers say that senior leaders have high expectations of them and provide opportunities for them to grow and develop in their roles. They are especially appreciative of training focusing on behaviour management, safeguarding and conditions such as autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). However, teachers' practice has been mostly developed in The Parks. Currently, there are few opportunities available for teachers to further develop their understanding of different teaching styles by, for example, learning from best practice in other schools.
- Since moving to its new premises, the school has expanded rapidly, almost doubling the number of pupils on roll. In response to this, the proprietor has employed additional skilled teachers, who are helping to ensure pupils' good progress in various subjects. However, plans to accredit pupils learning in science, art and food technology are yet to be implemented.

Governance

- The proprietor knows the school exceptionally well. He is known by staff and pupils because he regularly comes into school. The proprietor has ensured that the school's new premises are well maintained and well resourced in most subjects. However, he is aware that there are several actions to be taken for the school to move on to its next stage of development. For example, art is an integral part of the curriculum, and very popular with pupils. However, it is not as well resourced as it could be.
- The proprietor meets regularly with the headteacher and senior leaders and receives termly reports on their work. This ensures that he is kept abreast of new developments at the school.
- The proprietor has first-hand experience of the quality of teaching and pupils' learning, personal development and welfare. He knows where the school's priorities lie. To further enhance provision, the proprietor has recently agreed to the employment of four teaching assistants.
- The proprietor has had appropriate safeguarding training, including in relation to 'Prevent' duty, which is part of the government's agenda for tackling racism and extremism.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders make sure that all staff are trained well and safeguarding records are accurate. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place; they

help to ensure that pupils are safe while in school and when on educational visits. Individual risk assessments have been carried out on each pupil. Staff are fully conversant with these assessments. They monitor pupils closely to ensure their safety.

- All checks are made on staff to ensure their suitability to work with children. Designated safeguarding leaders, including the proprietor, are trained to a high standard. All staff know how to spot signs of neglect and/or abuse.
- The safeguarding policy is current and available to parents on request. Staff are familiar with the school's policies and government guidelines, including the latest guidance on keeping children safe in education. All staff have had 'Prevent' duty training.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- All teachers are subject specialists. They make their respective subjects interesting and work effectively to engage pupils in activities in class. Teachers know pupils well and are aware of potential conflicts and/or 'flash points', most of which they are able to circumvent. De-escalation techniques are used effectively to minimise disruption and create the calm and orderly conditions needed for effective learning.
- In English, teaching focuses on developing pupils' reading and writing skills. Typically, teachers extend pupils' writing through encouraging them to use connectives, such as 'therefore', 'however' and 'because', and embedded clauses to make their writing more interesting. Workbooks show that pupils make good progress in developing their comprehension skills and ability to draw conclusions from texts. This is evident in pupils' analysis of different narrative techniques, including those used by Shakespeare when describing the intensity of Romeo and Juliet's love for each other.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils are high. Regular assessments in subjects such as mathematics give teachers a good indication of pupils' development and where they need to be challenged. This was evident in a class when pupils were learning how to find the lengths of various lines using Pythagoras' theorem. By the end of the session, all pupils could calculate the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle using the theorem.
- Younger pupils in the nurture class have complex learning difficulties, of which teachers and care workers are acutely aware. Sometimes, pupils are reluctant to engage in learning. However, teachers are skilled at making learning fun and encouraging pupils to get involved. Pupils' workbooks show that they have plenty of opportunities to apply their mathematical skills. For example, books show accurate calculations of football pitch perimeters and average scores of different teams over a given season. As in all classes, pupils have access to computers and are developing their information, communication and technology skills well. Pupils usually take pride in their work, as is evident in their books and exhibited work in class, on topics such as life in Britain during the Second World War.
- All teachers adhere to the school's feedback and assessment policy. They help pupils to learn from their mistakes and improve their grammar, punctuation and spelling, as well as the accuracy of their calculations.
- Pupils love to cook. Teachers develop pupils' home economics skills well, linking cooking to the life skills pupils will need for the next stage of their learning after school. Pupils know how to avoid dangers when using sharp implements, including knives and scissors.

They keep a tidy kitchen and know to always use oven gloves when taking trays and dishes out of the oven. Pupils follow instructions well. This was evident when they watched a cutting demonstration before skilfully dicing and chopped onions into fine chunks and narrow rings.

- Effective teaching helps pupils to understand the structure and functions of the body, as well as processes such as photosynthesis. Pupils understand fertilisation and the different stages of pregnancy and learn about the function of the umbilical cord and placenta. While pupils have a well-developed appreciation of the theoretical aspects of science, few opportunities are available for them to engage in investigative activities.
- Teachers help pupils to make strong progress in art. Pupils quickly develop their skills in using different media, such as pencil, charcoal and crayon, and can emulate the styles of well-known artists such as Picasso. Pupils' folders contain examples of well-executed portraits, and pop art in the style of Andy Warhol.
- Classroom displays show that pupils take pride in their work and pay close attention to detail. Pupils describe art as 'therapy' and say that it is relaxing. However, pupils' ability to develop their skills in some areas, such as collage and painting, are somewhat limited because art is not as well resourced as it could be.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- Nearly all pupils arrive at The Parks having been excluded from one or more previous schools. Many have been on the roll of several schools for short periods. Pupils joining the school often have little enthusiasm for learning, many are distrustful of adults, and they have low self-esteem. Pupils' poor attitudes and lack of self-confidence soon change as they develop trusting relationships with staff and their peers.
- Pupils know that there are always consequences to their actions, particularly when interacting with others. They are becoming increasingly perseverant and are developing their resilience to failure and ability to learn from their mistakes.
- Parents who spoke with the inspector were very complimentary about teachers' ability to engage their children in learning. Typically, they comment that their children's attitude to learning and their achievements in reading, writing and mathematics have improved. Parents recognise the good work the school does to improve pupils' attendance.
- Pupils are aware of the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse and smoking. They understand why a healthy diet and regular exercise are important to their physical and mental well-being.
- Pupils learn about sexual health and contraception. They enjoy participating in sporting activities in school, such as football and table tennis. Pupils take advantage of a wider range of sports and physical activities, including, golf, cricket, ice skating, boxing and trampolining, in local sports centres.
- Pupils know how to use the internet safely. They have a good understanding of cyber bullying and take all necessary steps to avoid it. Pupils are not allowed to use mobile phones in school.
- Pupils say that there is no bullying at school. They understand that racism and

homophobic bullying are wrong and insist that neither happen in school.

- Pupils say that they feel safe at school. New pupils quickly settle into school life and are invariably accepted by their peers. Pupils form very close bonds with each other and adults. They know exactly what to do if they have a concern or require information.
- Pupils benefit from independent careers advice. They are supported in creating their personal profiles and learning the necessary skills to present themselves well in interview situations. Previously, few pupils were in Year 11; this year, there are many more pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils have visited several colleges and acquired information on different courses, including hair and beauty and child care. A few pupils have had 'taster courses' in areas including construction.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave sensibly during breakfast club, where they enjoy a hot breakfast and talking to their peers and staff. Staff are available during lunchtimes and breaktimes and between lessons, to ensure that movement around the school is calm and orderly.
- Pupils are proud of their school and help to ensure that it is kept clean and tidy. When pupils find it difficult to engage in lessons, they know that they can take 'time out', talk to teachers, the headteacher, care workers and the school's educational psychologist.
- Teachers take a consistent approach to managing behaviour in class. They know that most pupils have had significant disruptions in their family lives and previous schools. Such factors adversely impact on the social and emotional stability of some pupils. However, staff make no excuses for poor behaviour. Senior leaders ensure that staff new to the school have extensive training to ensure that they can manage the most challenging behaviour.
- Pupils learn that inappropriate language and disrespect towards staff are not tolerated. Teachers always challenge such behaviour. They remind pupils of the importance of good conduct and the school's sanctions for breaking the rules.
- Staff are of the view that behaviour is well managed, indicating that pupils learn to abide by the rules and show consideration towards others.
- The school's behaviour logs show that pupils who infringe the rules are sanctioned appropriately, in line with the school's behaviour policy. Results from the staff survey administered during the inspection, and parents' and local authority representatives' views, indicate that behaviour is good. Inspection evidence concurs with this.
- The school has had no exclusions for at least the past two years. School records show that pupils' attendance rapidly improves as soon as they start attending the school. Some pupils never miss a day. Pupils are punctual to lessons. Any lateness is usually due to factors outside pupils' control. For example, some pupils travel long distances from other towns and boroughs and are sometimes late due to traffic congestion.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' progress in subjects such as English, mathematics, science and art is directly related to the time they spend at the school. The longer pupils stay, the better their progress. Baseline assessments, carried out soon after pupils start at the school, reveal that their reading, writing, grammar, punctuation, spelling and calculation skills are below those typically expected for their age. Some pupils have significant gaps in their learning, due to extended periods out of education.
- Pupils' work is regularly assessed. Due to the school's recent expansion, there has been an increase in the number of pupils in Years 10 and 11. This year, far more pupils are studying for GCSEs in English and mathematics, for which they are well prepared.
- Pupils like to read and make strong progress in this area from their starting points. Those not yet confident enough to read for their peers enjoy listening to their teachers read. Pupils are developing an appreciation of the work of a widening range of authors, including Michael Morpurgo and Roald Dahl.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics because they enjoy problem-solving activities. They understand the importance of well-developed calculation skills in everyday life and benefit from good teaching. Workbooks show that pupils are skilled at using, and applying, fractions, decimals and percentages.
- All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school's curriculum reflects the individual requirements of pupils who have education, health and care (EHC) plans. Teachers are conversant with pupils' targets and make sure that effective support is available to ensure pupils' good progress.
- The school has recently introduced a new form of continuous assessment, which all teachers have been trained to use. Pupils are well prepared for their assessments and examinations. Crucially, leaders can see immediately whether pupils are starting to fall behind and respond to this with additional assistance or specialist support.
- All pupils are prepared well to acquire functional skills in reading, writing and mathematics, for which they are accredited through the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). At present, there is no end-of-course accreditation for pupils in science, art, food technology or history. Plans are afoot to accredit pupils for their good work in these subjects.
- The functional skills and GCSE qualifications that older pupils acquire in English and mathematics help to ensure their readiness for employment or further training. Pupils are well placed to be successful in the next part of their learning and employment journey after leaving the school.

School details

Unique reference number	137821
DfE registration number	359/6000
Inspection number	10067911

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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Inspire Training and Education
Chair	Paul Keogh
Executive Headteacher	Garfield Binns
Annual fees (day pupils)	£35,575
Telephone number	01744 661201
Website	Not applicable
Email address	garybinns@inspiretes.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–14 July 2016

Information about this school

- The Parks is a small secondary school which is part of Inspire Training and Education. The Inspire Group also provides residential healthcare, supported living and family support. Due to the vulnerable nature of pupils, the school does not have a dedicated website. General information about schools and services is available to parents and carers.
- Pupils learn in small groups. The school provides specialist education services for up to 14 pupils aged 11 to 16. At the time of the inspection, no pupils were above 16 years of age. All pupils have complex emotional, mental health, social and behavioural needs.
- All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school does not use any

alternative providers.

- The school does not have a governing body. The headteacher and senior leaders report to the owner of Inspire Training and Education.
- Local authorities place pupils at The Parks, often following extended periods of disrupted education.
- In August 2017, the Department for Education (DfE) granted the school's request for a material change, after which the number of pupils on roll increased from eight to 14. At this time, the school relocated to new premises.
- Pupils attend a breakfast club at the start of the school day. This is managed by the proprietor.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in a range of subjects, including English, science, art, food technology and mathematics. Pupils' work and assessment folders were scrutinised during observations and separately. The inspector was accompanied by the headteacher on most observations.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor and headteacher, teachers, social workers and parents. Telephone conversations were held with parents and representatives from commissioning authorities. The inspector took account of eight staff responses to the inspection questionnaire.
- There were no responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, to be considered. A discussion was held with pupils. Informal discussions were held with pupils throughout the course of the inspection.
- The inspector examined a range of documentary evidence. This included pupils' EHC plans, checks on the quality of teaching and teachers' performance and safeguarding documentation, including risk assessments. In addition, the inspector scrutinised the school's development plans and reviews of its own performance.
- The inspector checked various records of pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour and the school's records and checks on the suitability of staff to work with children.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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