

Park House School

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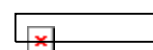
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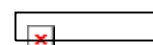
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Introduction and summary

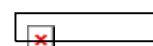


Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

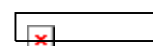
Information about the school



Park House School is a small, privately-owned school registered for eight boys and girls with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) in the age-range 4 - 11. It was opened in February 2005. At the time of inspection there was one child on roll. The school is sited in a large private house with access to adjacent playing fields in the village of Thorney, Cambridgeshire. The school has three teaching staff, including the head teacher who is also one of the proprietors. The school aims to provide a warm, caring and structured environment in which pupils can develop to their fullest potential.

Pupils are placed from local education authorities (LEA). All pupils have statements of special educational need (SEN) for ASD and they may also have associated learning and behavioural difficulties. The school has substantial access to specialist services. On admission the attainment levels of the pupils fall below the normal range of national expectations.

Summary of main findings



Park House School is a very good school. Although only recently opened it is already meeting its

learning and achievement. The school provides a well-planned and highly relevant curriculum, which is specifically matched to the very precise needs of its pupils. The timetabling of the school day makes a very positive and significant contribution to the pupils' academic and social development and their communication skills. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Assessment procedures are models of very good practice and used very effectively in planning for pupils' further development. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. It is good for their spiritual, moral and cultural development. Links with parents and other partners are very good. There is a clear vision for the school's future development.

What the school does well

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- its assessment of pupils' educational needs and potential, and the care and support they receive is of an excellent quality;
- its multi-disciplinary team-work has a positive and significant impact on pupils' overall progress;
- it sets very relevant individual targets and objectives for its pupils, which are clearly linked to their specific needs;
- it makes very good use of specialist strategies which provide active learning techniques, making lessons purposeful but also fun; and
- its provision for developing pupils' independence and social skills is excellent.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations

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- provide all relevant information to parents and partners as outlined in section 6 of this report.

Next steps

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Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- to increase the contact for pupils in the wider community with regard to their cultural development; and
- to develop further the school's involvement with local primary and secondary schools.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

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1. The quality of education provided by the school

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The quality of the curriculum

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The quality of the curriculum is very good. The school successfully meets its aims in providing an environment in which pupils feel secure, are treated as individuals and have the opportunity to develop their skills to their fullest potential. The school benefits greatly from the input of a multi-disciplinary team of specialists to which it has substantial access. These include a clinical psychologist, an occupational paediatric therapist and a speech and language therapist. This group meets weekly with the teaching staff and advises them on a variety of strategies they can use, both to customise the curriculum and support their teaching. This holistic approach has a significant impact on pupils' overall progress. Pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) are very precise and specific to their learning needs. The Foundation Stage of the National Curriculum is modified and taught through the Training and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children programme (TEACCH).

The range of activities, both within and outside school makes a very positive contribution to pupils' academic and social development. Particular emphasis is placed on the opportunities for increasing independence through improvement of social skills. This is reinforced by the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme and the individual targets set in IEPs. For example, specific attention has been paid to the difficulties some pupils have in acclimatising to aspects of their physical environment. Individual programmes are established, with the support of the multi-disciplinary team, to overcome these problems through a daily regime of desensitising activities. This has been particularly successful in allowing pupils to become more enthusiastic and confident in engaging with their external surroundings. Daily routines have been established by which pupils learn to become more physically independent, for example, undressing and dressing themselves for physical activities and putting away equipment after use.

Besides the focus on developing pupils' basic communication and social skills, good opportunities are provided for their creative and physical needs. There are designated areas for art and creative play. There is also an information and communications technology (ICT) room, which is used creatively to support and improve pupils' communication skills and enhance their learning. The activity room with soft play equipment provides pupils with opportunities for collaborative games, which encourage interaction. The school has very easy and safe access to the equipment in the local playing field and park which the pupils use regularly, not only for recreation but to provide them with contact with the wider community.

The quality of the teaching and assessment

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The quality of teaching is very good. It was good or better in all lessons observed during the inspection. This consistent high quality teaching ensures that pupils achieve well. In relation to the levels of attainment pupils have on admission they make very good progress in a short time.

The quality of teaching is underpinned by the high expectations teachers have of what pupils can achieve. Teachers have a clear understanding of their pupils' individual communication difficulties, as well as their specific learning needs. A significant strength of the teaching is the skilful modification of the curriculum and detailed planning of tasks which reflect those needs. Various

teaching strategies are used effectively to motivate and engage pupils' interests. For example, during the inspection a pupil had a mathematical task which required him to count the number of bears. Following his success he was rewarded with a sticker and immediately communicated that he only needed 'one more' to achieve his target.

Pupils are taught English and mathematics through the TEACCH programme. The Picture Exchange Communication System is used as a basis for communication and the pupils are acquiring increased skills in its use. Simple, but effective resources are used to support and promote writing skills. As a result of this personalised approach, pupils acquire a good range of basic skills in communicating, listening, writing, improvement in their reading skills and the use of number. ICT is used effectively to enhance teaching and learning across a range of subjects. Pupils are at the early stages of using the computer keyboard.

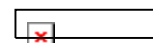
Teachers make lessons purposeful, but also fun. The timetable has been specifically designed to provide consolidation of learning in the classroom in the morning, and activities in and around the local community in the afternoon. These visits and activities make a valuable contribution to improving pupils' social and communication skills. For example, teachers video pupils' reactions to their environment outside the school and use this evidence for assessment and planning, in conjunction with the multi-disciplinary team. Consequently, over time a record of progress is built up which can be shared with parents, carers and partners. The parents were very happy with their children's progress and the contribution made by the teachers. They recognised the value of the very good links they have with the school and are appreciative of its welcoming and inclusive ethos.

The procedures for assessment are excellent. The school carries out an assessment of pupils' attainment on admission, which provides a base-line from which they can set targets for improvement. Staff assess the pupils' progress at the end of each day, with full discussion and an evidence-base of photographic and written records to estimate success and identify areas for development. The weekly multi-disciplinary meetings provide a forum for teachers to report on progress, and for the specialists to recommend and advise on strategies for further development. Consequently targets are set which are challenging but achievable, and build on previous attainment. Each pupil's IEP is reviewed half-termly to chart their progress in targeted areas from the time of admission. Parents are fully informed and involved in all aspects of planning for IEPs.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



Provision for pupils' social development is very good. Very effective use is made of daily visits and activities within the local area. These are planned with very clear and precise learning objectives for both academic and social development. However, at the same time, pupils have fun and enjoy the variety of walks and venues. They become increasingly confident as they explore the local surroundings. Video recording and digital photography is used very effectively to record the pupils' experiences for further discussion back in the classroom. This makes a significant contribution to their communication skills. Circle time is also used effectively to improve pupils' interaction with adults and provide opportunities for them to learn to share and take turns.

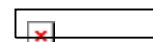
Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. Appropriate opportunities are provided for them to be reflective. The use of the sensory area is very effective in allowing pupils a quiet and calming time, which has a positive effect on their emotional and social development. Staff provide excellent role models for pupils' moral development, both by example and by encouraging pupils to make appropriate choices and begin to take responsibility for their actions. As a consequence pupils develop their self-esteem and self-confidence. However, not enough use is

made of links with the local and wider community in terms of inviting visitors to the school with a view to extending the pupils' cultural dimensions.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



Park House School provides an excellent and caring environment where its pupils feel secure. Their welfare, health and safety are a priority for all staff. The holistic approach of the multi-disciplinary team of teachers and advisers ensures all aspects of the pupils' well-being are very well-managed.

School policies are very comprehensive and include procedures for child protection, anti-bullying strategies, health and safety issues, fire safety and educational visits. All staff are trained in basic First Aid. The school ensures that there is always one member of staff who is fully qualified in First Aid on the premises and included in educational visits. Fire safety precautions are carried out regularly and systematically recorded.

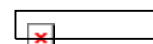
The reward system for pupils is intrinsic to their educational and social development, but is balanced by an appropriate range of strategies to manage any unacceptable behaviour. This comprehensive approach to behaviour management provides a very calm and safe environment for pupils and staff. On those rare occasions when physical control is required, all staff have been trained in appropriate procedures, which are based on clear policies. There is appropriate provision for the monitoring and recording of serious incidents should they arise.

There is a very good ratio of pupils to staff and pupils are supervised at all times, in the building, outside in the grounds and on activities away from school. Arrangements for the registration of admissions and attendance meet the requirements fully.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



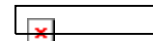
Park House School is privately-owned limited company with a management board, which has overall responsibility for the legal and financial running of the school. Recruitment procedures have been established which ensure that all staff appointed to the school have undergone appropriate checks and are suitable to work with children.

There are sufficient, suitably qualified staff to meet the needs of the pupils. Overall pupils, and their parents, have access to a very good range of expertise through the multi-disciplinary team, and this makes a significant contribution to the quality of educational provision. All staff have access to a range of local training opportunities. Liaison with the local primary school, although in its early stages, provides opportunities for the continuing professional development of the staff.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The accommodation overall is good. The school is situated in a small annexe attached to the main house. There is good provision for external play in a small fenced off area, which contains a trampoline on a bed of safety bark and surrounded by a safety net. The school has immediate access to the adjacent parkland, which also has a variety of apparatus. The school makes good use of this facility to provide a range of activities for physical education.

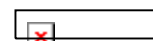
Internally the overall decoration and furniture is of good quality and provides an attractive learning environment for pupils. There is a good range of rooms which are designated for a variety of activities. One classroom has a small side room with two individual work stations, where pupils can work in a quiet environment; the classroom is also used for messy play, with sand, water and painting activities. Equipment for soft play is set out in the second classroom, which also contains a small, but well-equipped sensory corner. The third classroom is set aside for stories, music and ICT activities. These areas are used well to enhance learning by providing routine changes in activities during the day in a variety of specialised environments.

There is a suitable medical room with a bed and bath. There are sufficient toilets and washrooms with separate facilities for staff.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school meets most, but not all of the regulations in relation to the provision of information for parents. The prospectus is in a brief, readable format, but does not fully meet the requirements as it has a number of omissions. It does not include arrangements for discipline of pupils, or details of the curriculum offered by the school. Neither does it make clear the measures used to promote the health and safety of pupils, their good behaviour or any sanctions that have been adopted for pupils' misbehaviour.

The school has very good levels of communication with parents through daily contact. Fortnightly meetings are held with parents to discuss pupil progress against objectives on the IEP. The LEA SEN adviser attends half-termly IEP review meetings. Regular home visits are carried out by staff and these are valuable in helping pupils maintain and transfer skills between home and school. Annual review reports provide parents with a complete overview of pupils' achievements and progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

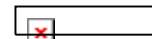
The school meets most but not all of the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- ensure the prospectus includes details of the curriculum offered by the school (paragraph 6(2)(g)); and
- ensure the prospectus includes the arrangements for promoting the health and safety, discipline and the good behaviour of pupils and any sanctions adopted by the school for pupils who misbehave (paragraph 6(2)(h)).

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

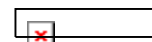


The school has a clear policy for handling complaints which meets fully all requirements. Alongside initial informal measures, there are well-structured formal procedures by which complaints can be considered fairly and objectively. The complaints panel includes an independent member of the local community.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

School details



Name of school:	Park House School
DfES ref number:	873/6035
Type of school:	Special day school for pupils with communication and associated learning difficulties.
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 1, Girls 0, Total 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 1, Girls 0, Total 1
Annual fees (day pupils):	£44,000 - £53,000
Address of school:	Park House Thorney Peterborough, Cambs PP6 0SA
E-mail address:	Parkhouseschool@btconnect.com
Telephone number:	01733 271187
Fax number:	01733 271187
Headteacher:	Mr. Alan Crossland
Proprietor:	Mr. & Mrs. A. Crossland
Lead Inspector:	Mrs. Helen Maskew
Dates of inspection:	9 - 11 May 2005

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