



Office for Standards
in Education

Inspection Report

PARK VIEW SCHOOL

Unique Reference Number: 114288

LEA: Durham

Inspection Dates: 25 – 27 May 2004
Reporting Inspector: Linden Phillips HMI

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was
deemed section 12 (3) under the same act
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INTRODUCTION

This inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of the school and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by four of Her Majesty's Inspectors accompanied by a lay inspector.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1	Very good
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Adequate
Grade 4	Not adequate

Description of the school

Park View is a larger than average comprehensive secondary school of over 1400 pupils including a sixth form of about 280 students. It has enjoyed Language College status for six years and is a Beacon school. The school is oversubscribed and its numbers grow steadily. 97.5% of the school's pupils are from the majority ethnic group; six per cent are eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average, and fewer than average have special educational needs.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Park View is a very effective school. It is led with vision and energy. A strong focus on how well pupils learn shines through all activities. Park View uses thorough self-review to accurately judge its effectiveness. Standards are very high and pupils achieve very well overall. The headteacher has a firm grasp on the direction of the school and knows its strengths and weaker areas well. He is supported capably by an energetic and committed senior team. The professional development of staff is outstanding, particularly for newly qualified teachers. Planning to adapt and improve school practice is motivated by a desire to constantly improve the achievements of all pupils. Pupils respond very well and are cheerful, purposeful and keen to learn. They feel safe and well supported. The school provides very good value for money.

Grade: 1

Effectiveness of the school's sixth form

The school views the overall effectiveness of the sixth form to be very good. The evidence from the inspection confirms this judgement. Pupil achievement at GCE A level is very good, in the top 25% of all sixth forms, with many attaining high grades. There is very good progression with more than 80% of year 13 pupils moving on to higher education. There is a very strong and industrious work ethic amongst pupils in the sixth form, their behaviour is very good and they value the support, expertise and knowledge of teachers. Attendance is good and the standard of pupils' work is high.

Grade: 1

How has the school improved?

There has been significant progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and the provision for pupils' with special educational needs have improved and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are now very good. These improvements have had a very positive impact on learning and promoted significant improvement in standards. The spiritual development of pupils was considered to be a relative weakness in the previous inspection. Though the school has increased the curriculum provision for spiritual development, it has not yet provided a daily collective act of worship for all pupils.

Grade: 1

Capacity to improve

There is a cadre of experienced, knowledgeable and committed leaders in the school who share the vision to constantly refine and improve. They are well supported by governors and parents who also want to drive the school forward. Park View has an effective self review system which is closely monitored by the senior team and department heads. The school involves its middle managers in excellent professional development.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

This highly effective school is well aware of the fine tuning necessary to raise standards even higher through:

- further refinement of planning by focussing the very good reviewing process more systematically on outcomes
- extending provision for those who are gifted or talented
- a strategy to manage and mitigate the effect of staff change and absence
- improvement of some areas of the school's accommodation and environment
- improving the quality of monitoring the provision in ICT
- ensuring all departments are equally effective.

The school is looking to develop its 14 – 19 provision and may wish to extend its range of vocational and other programmes.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

The standards achieved by pupils are very high. Results in public examinations are well above national averages in all three key stages. Though there is some variation between subjects, the school is aware of the relative strengths and weaknesses and is working hard to establish consistently good practice in all areas. The school's view is that pupils make very good progress in their learning during their time at school. Observation of lessons and discussions with pupils confirm this view. There is an effective target-setting system which is well understood by pupils and their progress towards these achievements is monitored carefully by teachers. Pupils are well supported in their learning and report that they enjoy it. The most able pupils have the potential, however, to make even more progress especially in Key Stage 3.

Grade: 1

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The school judges that the personal development of learners is very good and inspection findings confirm this. Observation of pupils in and around school show that behaviour and attitudes are of a very high standard. Pupils are confident and articulate. They enjoy good relationships with one another and with staff. Attendance is good: data show that the vast majority of pupils are rarely absent and are punctual to school and lessons. Pastoral systems support pupils well; as a result exclusion rates are low. However, the school should check its approach to calling parents on the first day of absence. Pupils are keen to learn and to contribute to school and community life through participation in a wide range of activities which promote a healthy lifestyle, including considerable involvement in sports and physical activities. Pupils' social, moral and spiritual development is promoted well through PSHE, tutorial programmes and school assemblies. Pupils respond with enthusiasm to requests to contribute to their communities, for example through charity fundraising work led by the 6th form and by locally based projects to improve the environment or working with primary pupils. The school has put in place a programme designed to raise pupils' awareness of multicultural issues: there is an international dimension to much of the work.

Grade: 1

QUALITY OF PROVISION

The school assesses its teaching as very good. Observations carried out during the inspection confirm this. There is a strong culture across the school towards improving the quality of teaching and learning. There is high quality monitoring and detailed feedback given to help teachers improve. The best lessons are well planned, challenging and conducted at a lively pace. Lesson objectives are clearly defined. Teachers are well-informed and use a varied range of appropriate teaching techniques involving a good balance of theoretical and practical activities. There has been good investment in information and communication technologies which were well used in the lessons seen. Pupils indicate that the use of new technology, when available, has improved their interest and enthusiasm. The recent introduction of interactive white boards has given teachers a potent tool to enhance these techniques and, when used well, is improving pupils' learning. Most of the time, pupils are motivated and enthusiastic. They are actively engaged and demonstrate a high level of understanding.

Within its Beacon School status, Park View has worked very well with other schools to share good practice in teaching.

In the sixth form, pupils have well-developed research and study skills and work industriously outside lesson time. There is a strong emphasis on challenging pupils to take the initiative, think through problems and share their findings and understanding. Behaviour is very well managed. In a small number of lessons there is insufficient challenge for the most able pupils and they confirmed this in discussion with inspectors. A broad range of assessment strategies is used very effectively to consolidate pupils' learning and help track their progress against pre-determined goals, resulting in very good standards of work and personal development.

Discussion with staff and talking to pupils about the range of activities they experience, as well as the schemes of work seen, all confirm that Park View offers a curriculum which caters well for different groups of pupils. This is interpreted in the classroom by teachers who give the children a wide and varied range of activities. A good example of this is the very good course in Key Stage 4, designed for learners who need support, where pupils were able to clearly explain their new learning, the breadth of their experience and who glowed with self esteem and confidence. The curriculum is supported well by organising pupils into appropriate ability groups and the senior and middle managers work very hard to enable teachers to plan their work to match different pupils' needs. Some lessons seen indicate that this matching can still be more carefully done. Different choices are offered at Key Stage 4 which has resulted in pupils progressing at a suitable pace to match their ability and to be successful at GCSE and A level. What is taught, and how, is kept under close scrutiny to ensure it continues to meet the needs of all pupils and is coherent in all subjects. There is a focus on early review of Key Stage 3. Language college status and other school awards have had a significant impact on the curriculum by extending the range of opportunities for pupils, including fast track languages. The school has a history of including many vocational opportunities in the curriculum and is now looking to develop its 14 – 19 provision. Extra-curricular provision is centred on sport, music and drama and pupils report that they appreciate it.

The school cares for and supports its pupils extremely well. Child protection arrangements are good and the procedures to ensure health and safety are of very good quality. The headteacher places a very high priority on catering for the needs of the individual child and all members of staff follow his lead. The youngest pupils praise the very good arrangements to help them settle at secondary school and pupils are confident to approach staff with concerns because of the very good quality relationships that pervade the school. Pupils' progress in all subjects is regularly monitored, discussed and recorded so that they have a very clear idea of what they need to do in order to improve. The provision for those with special educational needs has improved since the previous inspection and is now very good, with parents fully involved in the review process, as they are in all matters relating to their children's welfare.

Grade: 1

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Park View is led with vision and energy by a management team dedicated to improving learning, standards of achievement and the personal development of the young people in its care. They are ably supported by middle managers who are fully aware of the school aims and work hard to meet them.

The school's self review and evaluation are thorough, coherent, well evidenced and indicate appropriate areas for development and improvement. Staff performance is sensitively but rigorously managed. New staff in particular benefit from excellent support including mentoring and coaching. The school has identified appropriate areas for improvement and development of planning is very good at a whole school and departmental level. These set out clearly what needs to be done and how. However, in some there is scope to set targets more precisely as outcomes.

Members of staff are well qualified and experienced in their subjects and their effectiveness in the classroom is closely monitored. However, problems related to recent staffing changes and absences, arising sometimes from staff leaving for promotion, are having an adverse effect on some classes. It also makes it difficult for the school to monitor the coherence of what the pupils study – for example in ICT.

The school manages its split site well. The school buildings are not ideal but the school adapts them inventively and most classrooms are bright and welcoming. ICT provision is significantly improved. Some outdoor areas and some fabric of the school would benefit from attention. The school does not provide for a daily act of worship, but does organise weekly form assemblies, year assemblies and hour-long tutorial sessions where pupils are able to reflect.

Finances are managed well. The school provides very good value for money.

Grade: 1

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