



Park Lane High

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107561
Local Authority Calderdale
Inspection number 287854
Inspection dates 15–16 November 2006
Reporting inspector Linden Phillips HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Park Lane
School category	Community		Exley, Halifax
Age range of pupils	11–16		West Yorkshire HX3 9LG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01422 362215
Number on roll (school)	423	Fax number	01422 301050
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Garry Stringfellow
		Headteacher	Mr Neil Clark
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	15–16 November 2006	287854

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Park Lane High is a small 11–16 secondary school with 423 pupils, around 90% of whom are from White British families. Intake is affected by the selective system in Calderdale. Twice the average number of pupils is entitled to free school meals and there is a higher than average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils join and leave the school during term time at a much faster rate than in most schools.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Park Lane High offers its pupils a satisfactory education. It has improved considerably since its last inspection and is continuing to do so. There has been a lift in the expectations of staff and their pupils of what they can aspire to. The new buildings and technology are helping pupils see that they are valued and what they are capable of, but the significant factors are the leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of the staff. The school is now first choice for most of its parents.

The school can show that learning has improved: staff are more aware of how to help each pupil progress. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and so ensure overall satisfactory achievement. Pupils' personal development and well-being are managed effectively, leading to improved behaviour and a more positive attitude to learning. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum which has broadened choice and offered better opportunities for pupils to continue in education after 16. However, there are some gaps in the provision for religious education (RE) and information and communication technology (ICT) at Key Stage 4. Pupils enjoy coming to school and express a pride in representing their school in their communities.

Issues for improvement from the last inspection have been addressed effectively. Although some pupils still do not attend regularly, the school has worked together with parents and pupils to improve attendance and punctuality year-on-year. The results of this can be seen in the improved attainment of many pupils who do come to school regularly and work with their teachers to achieve of their best.

The school recognises that there is much still to do. Many pupils are capable of achieving more than they do. The behaviour of some pupils and their willingness to cooperate with their teachers to improve their work could be better. Some pupils disrupt the learning of others. Pupils' experiences of sports, clubs, interest groups and other 'enrichments' within the school curriculum could be wider.

The good leadership of the headteacher is firmly reflected in the ambitious vision and caring ethos of the school. A shared willingness to improve is beginning to permeate and raise the expectations of staff, pupils, parents and carers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement and attainment of all pupils.
- Encourage pupils to be more engaged in school clubs and activities so that they benefit from a breadth of experience.
- Ensure that behaviour in lessons is managed effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that 'learning is never less than good' and in particular ensure that pupils are helped to understand what they have learned by the end of the lesson.
- Ensure that the curriculum meets national requirements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory because most pupils make the progress expected of them in both key stages. Pupils enter the school with standards that are well below average and their standards remain well below average when they leave school at the end of Year 11. GCSE results were well below average in 2005. The results for 2006 indicate some improvement, particularly in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A* to C including English and mathematics.

Pupils who left school in 2005 made satisfactory progress during their time in school and did as well as might be expected in GCSE examinations. Hence their achievement was satisfactory. Again, 2006 results suggest an improvement in pupils' achievement.

Pupils achieve particularly well in mathematics and their progress, from the time they enter the school, is in the top 15% of schools nationally.

Pupils in all year groups make satisfactory progress in lessons and in their written work. Progress is not consistent across subjects and the school is addressing the reasons. There are also some variations in achievement for some groups of pupils. A significant minority of pupils join the school at times other than the start of Year 7. Their learning has been disrupted and examination results suffer, despite the efforts of the school. There are still some pupils, though the number is decreasing, whose progress is restricted by erratic attendance. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive satisfactory support and are enabled to make similar progress to that of others in their group.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

In many lessons pupils respond well to the work set, although some found it difficult to maintain their concentration. Most pupils enjoy their education and want to be involved in their lessons, although some need reminding not to call out. Pupils' behaviour has improved in recent years and only a small percentage show poor behaviour. Major efforts have been made by the school to improve attendance. Many pupils are now attending more regularly and although attendance overall is below the national average it has improved markedly. A few parents indicated problems with behaviour, although most agreed that it is good. Provision to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, although arrangements for spiritual development lack full coverage of religious education.

Pupils are increasingly contributing to the school community through the developing school council, and the level of volunteering for older pupils to help younger colleagues demonstrates a ready willingness of many to help others. They also help those in the wider community by raising money for charity. Pupils are more aware of safety issues and matters that affect their health. They participate well in the 'theme days' that allow the whole school community to learn about social and economic issues. Older pupils show a reasonable knowledge of issues to do with their economic well-being,

although not all are confident in expressing their ideas. Parents confirm their high regard for the school and its increasing standing in the community. Typical comments were that, 'the school has changed my son's attitude to learning', 'without the support of staff, my daughter would not be the happy person she is' and, 'my son left last year with results I never thought I'd see from him'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers have good relationships with pupils who appreciate the fact that teachers are 'stricter now' so that learning generally proceeds without interruption. Pupils are good humoured and cooperative but many need much encouragement and persuasion in order to make a real effort with their learning. Many lessons encourage pupils to discuss in pairs and groups to improve their abilities to express themselves and share understanding. In good lessons teachers use imaginative teaching strategies and select activities that genuinely hold their concentration and enable them to learn for themselves. However, in lessons that are satisfactory rather than good, pupils are often involved with tasks that are relevant and occupy them but only provide limited opportunities for new learning. In other lessons pupils' learning is restricted because there are gaps in their knowledge from earlier years or weaknesses in literacy skills.

All teachers follow the school's required format for lessons and provide particularly useful activities to get pupils thinking at the beginning of lessons. There is usually a chance at the end of the lesson for teachers to remind pupils of the main learning points. However, this useful reinforcement of what has been learnt is often rushed and pupils do not concentrate as well as they should.

Teachers set homework regularly and the tasks are generally useful. Pupils are aware of their target grade or level in every subject and know how well they are doing in relation to those targets. They speak highly of the advice that teachers give them so that they know just what they have to do to reach the next level.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has improved: it is satisfactory overall with some good features. The school has adapted its curriculum in the light of a review into how well it served pupils' needs. It now offers a much better range of options open to all pupils. At Key Stage 3 pupils follow national curriculum requirements and the school broadens that to include all pupils in the study of dance. This is bringing an extra dimension of physical expertise and self-esteem to all and enabling both boys and girls to understand the discipline and aesthetics which dance brings to culture.

At Key Stage 4 the curriculum meets most of the statutory requirements, although what needs to be studied for ICT and RE is not fully covered by all pupils. However, the school has well advanced teaching and training plans to ensure that all pupils are

confident in ICT when they leave. A planned change to the curriculum is designed to meet requirements for RE.

The school has made well-considered changes to the curriculum at Key Stage 4. Preparation and follow-up for work experience has improved. All pupils study an applied GCSE. This helps pupils to apply knowledge to a real-life vocational area and provides better progression to higher level academic and vocational study. Improved arts provision means that most pupils in Year 10 and 11 are able to follow a course in performing or visual arts. A number of pupils are able to successfully study vocational courses for part of their week at the local college. The effect of new courses on pupils' achievement is being monitored.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school makes good arrangements for the care of pupils. All legal requirements are met. Staff know the pupils well and understand their personal circumstances. This individual knowledge is greatly enhanced by computer-based monitoring information which contributes to regular discussions with pupils about their academic progress and personal development. Behaviour and attendance is carefully monitored and is leading to better achievement for some students. A high-profile rewards system is established and is helping to improve attendance. The school has yet to assess the impact of it on pupils' achievement. All pupils are well supported and most of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve their targets. The school makes good provision for the guidance given to pupils in preparation for the next stage of their education or role in the workplace.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. Good leadership of the school has increased the capacity of management to improve provision and raise attainment. A more focused set of expectations of staff and how they will support learning now pervades practice and planning. How well individual pupils achieve is monitored carefully.

The school's self-evaluation is good. Staff evaluate the effectiveness of their policies through discussion in faculties and learning groups. The school's improvement plan is thorough in identifying areas for improvement together with precise criteria against which to check if actions have been successful. This process has identified areas which have not been satisfactory and the school has made changes which effected improvements. Parents are increasingly involved in discussions with the school about such changes. Pupils' views are canvassed regularly by questionnaires and their views are considered and acted upon.

The governing body is active in its monitoring of the school and plans to sharpen its focus and increase the number of parents who are involved. Financial management is sound and the school gives good value for money.

The school deals with challenging circumstances, but does not intend that to limit what pupils can do. Challenges are faced and dealt with.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you all very much for making us welcome when we visited your school. You answered all our questions very helpfully and took time to ask us some questions too.

You told us how much you like the new building and all the technology. Most of you like coming to school because the teachers help you to enjoy your lessons and to learn. You told us that people outside the school are impressed by your smart uniforms, the way you raise money for charity and how well pupils behave.

Many of your parents wrote to us and the vast majority agreed with you about how proud they feel about their new school and how pleased they are that you are achieving well. Two typical comments were that, 'The school has changed my son's attitude to learning.' and 'Without the support of staff, my daughter would not be the happy person she is.' A few parents pointed to some poor behaviour.

Your headteacher and the staff have worked very hard to make the school a place that welcomes you all and they are very determined that you are going to do your best. You can help them by making sure you come to school and work in every lesson so that you learn new skills and pass your examinations.

We have asked the school to do these things.

- Make sure that all of you improve your grades.
- Explore ways of helping you take part in sports and clubs outside lessons so that you get the chance to enjoy more activities.
- Make all lessons interesting for you and take time in the lessons to check that you have understood what you were learning.
- Manage behaviour in all lessons. You can help your teachers by not interrupting or behaving in a way that stops other pupils working.
- Add to what you study in Years 10 and 11 so that you have good ICT skills and you understand other people's beliefs.

We wish you well in your school and your future studies