



# Parmiter's School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117576  
**Local Authority** HERTFORDSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 290878  
**Inspection dates** 30 November –1 December 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Jennifer Brown HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	High Elms Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Garston, Garston
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		Watford, Hertfordshire
			WD25 0UU
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 671424
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1240	<b>Fax number</b>	01923 894195
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	297		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Jackie Glossop
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Brian Coulshed
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 January 2002		

<b>Age group</b> 11–18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 30 November –1 December 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 290878
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## **Introduction**

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

## **Description of the school**

Parmiter's School is an 11 to 18 mixed, partially selective, non-denominational, voluntary-aided school, founded originally as a charity school in 1681 in Bethnal Green, East London. It serves a wide geographical area, with 10% of admissions coming from the local area of Watford based on locality admissions criteria. It is a larger than the average size school and is popular with parents. The proportions of students eligible for free school meals, with learning difficulties and disabilities, and statements of special educational need are low. The school has had specialist Technology College status since 2000 and gained a second specialism of music in 2005. The prior attainment of students is well above the national average and rising.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the school is very good with outstanding features. Parents hold the school in very high regard. Standards have improved since the last inspection and are well above average at each key stage. Although students make outstanding progress in some subject areas, such as mathematics, this is not the case in all subjects and the learning needs of the most able students are not always addressed sufficiently. The progress students make between the ages of 11 and 16 is good overall.

Students' personal development is outstanding, as is the care, support and guidance they receive. They are extremely proud of their school and loyal to it. They talk enthusiastically about the subjects they study and appreciate the extremely wide range of extra-curricular activities in which they can take part. They make an extensive contribution to the school and wider community through, for example, their involvement in musical activities or in raising money for charities. Students have very positive attitudes towards each other and adults in the school. The standard of behaviour is excellent: sanctions rarely have to be applied. Attendance is also exceptionally good. The recently introduced student congress is beginning to enable the student voice to be heard in a systematic way in the school.

Curriculum provision is outstanding. The technology specialist status of the school has been influential in extending learning opportunities and in improving resources and facilities. These have been further enhanced through the school's second specialism of music.

The headteacher and senior managers are strongly focused on improving and maintaining the high standards attained by students at the school. Action has been taken to address areas of the curriculum where performance has been weaker relative to other subjects and improvements are beginning to take effect. Senior managers have begun implementing assessment systems which enable students' progress to be tracked and monitored more effectively. Although newly refined systems have been introduced, they are not yet sufficiently embedded to ensure consistency of implementation across departments.

Teaching and learning are good overall and issues from the last inspection relating to the consistency of marking have been addressed. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is systematic. The school has put considerable effort into developing the teaching skills of its staff. Lessons are well structured and planned and teachers enjoy very good relationships with their students. The level of challenge in lessons is usually appropriate to the ability of the students, but, lesson plans do not consistently identify how the needs of higher ability students and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are to be met. Lesson observations do not always concentrate on how much progress pupils are making. The governing body discharges its responsibilities effectively, and governors are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school has a good capacity to improve and gives particularly effective value for money.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

Standards of attainment are consistently exceptionally high in almost all subjects. Students receive outstanding care, support and guidance from their tutors, and prompt action is taken to provide additional support where necessary. Consequently, they make particularly good progress during their time in the sixth form. Teaching and learning are good overall and teaching styles are now much more varied, adding to the enjoyment of learning. However, these challenging approaches are not consistently found across all subjects: occasionally students' progress is rather limited by uninspiring teaching. The sixth form curriculum is outstanding. Students are provided with an extensive range of academic courses which meet their needs. The number of students following advanced vocational courses is small, but growing, and many AS and GCE A level courses have a significant vocational element. These are increasingly popular.

Sixth form students willingly take on additional responsibilities and are very good role models for younger students. This was summed up by one sixth former who said, 'We can give back something to the school that has given us so much'. Guidance procedures to help students choose appropriate career paths are thorough and a very high proportion of students obtain a place at the university of their choice. The head of the sixth form and tutors operate as a highly effective team to ensure that the quality of the students' education and their personal development is outstanding.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Monitor and evaluate students' progress more rigorously in lessons.
- Embed the recently introduced assessment system for tracking and monitoring students' progress so that the findings can be used more effectively by departments, senior managers and governors.
- Ensure teachers consistently identify how they are going to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties and provide challenge to the most able.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Standards throughout the school and in the sixth form are very high. Results in national tests and examinations have been well above the national average for the last five years. Nearly 9 out of 10 pupils attain 5 or more higher passes at GCSE. In 2005, the percentage of students attaining A\* or A grades was well above the national average in all subjects except art, economics and information and communication technology (ICT). The school's specialist status has had a positive impact on improving standards in technology. In contrast to the national picture, in both 2004 and 2005 boys performed better than girls; the most able girls underachieved in science. Data supplied by the school indicates that this trend has been stemmed in 2006 by more carefully targeted academic mentoring.

The progress students make between the ages of 11 and 16 has been good for the last three years. Information provided by the school indicates that progress was also good in 2006. During this time the progress students make in different subjects, notably English, mathematics and science has varied. The provisional results in 2006 show between the ages of 14 and 16 students make excellent progress in English and mathematics, whereas their progress in science is satisfactory. Students made less progress than would be expected in science in 2005. This situation has begun to be addressed through entering higher ability students for examinations in all three sciences. In 2006, science results improved at GCSE A\*-C and A-A\*. However, departmental self-evaluation and associated actions for improvement are not always sufficiently focused on improving students' progress.

The progress of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is good and they are very well supported. Students' progress in the sixth form is very good.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. Students mature into confident, intelligent and highly articulate individuals. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and underpins the high regard students have for their school as well as the immensely positive relationships they enjoy between themselves and with most adults. Residential educational visits, such as the joint English and history visit to Ypres, provide excellent opportunities for high quality spiritual development. Cultural awareness and understanding are developed extensively across many subject areas. Students feel safe at the school and know that they will be supported if they have any concerns. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent and being keen to learn is the norm for almost everyone at the school.

Students show a good understanding of the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. In most cases, they express their views confidently in a climate of support where they know other students will listen and respect their views. This, together with their high standard of basic skills, prepares them extremely well for their future education and employment.

There are many opportunities for students to take on additional responsibilities, especially in the sixth form, where the prefect system, community activities and their contribution to the house system are excellent. The newly established school congress is leading the way forward for students of all ages to put forward suggestions of how the school can be further improved.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

##### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students come to their lessons eager to learn. Relationships between students and their teachers are mostly very positive, which results in an excellent atmosphere for learning. Where teaching is especially strong, teachers stimulate students' interests by actively engaging them in the learning and challenging them to think hard and to make decisions about the quality of their work. In some lessons, however, teachers do not use a wide variety of learning activities and questioning techniques to engage students actively in the learning. In the majority of lessons seen during the inspection, the level of challenge was appropriate to the range of ability, but higher attaining students were not always given tasks to extend them. The quality of marking has improved since the last inspection. As a result, most students are knowledgeable about the standards they achieve and what they need to do in order to improve.

Where it was seen, the support given to students with learning difficulties and disabilities was effective but their additional needs are not always identified and catered for by the class teacher.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

##### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding and meets statutory requirements. Very good opportunities are provided for learners, including those who are gifted and talented, or who have learning difficulties and disabilities, to achieve very high standards. The specialist status of the school has resulted in an expansion in the number of vocational related courses and the range of technology choices available to Year 10 students. Excellent technological facilities have been provided to support learning in the school's second specialism of music. The new timetable and structure of the school day have resulted in better use of time. The provision of personal, social and health education, citizenship and careers education has been reviewed. The new life skills programme is enabling these areas to be covered more consistently and in greater depth. This course, together with the sixth form liberal studies, is effectively supported by specialist help from outside agencies. Extra-curricular provision and enrichment are particular strengths of the school. Students value the many opportunities there are to take part in sport, musical activities, drama events and educational visits which provide excellent opportunities for their personal development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

A very wide range of systems is in place to support students' welfare. Those joining the school in Year 7 are supported by a very effective induction programme. Students are confident that if they have issues of concern, or require additional support with aspects of their learning, their needs will be met quickly and effectively. The school places great emphasis on working in partnership with parents and communication with them is strong.

Arrangements for safeguarding students are robust. Students receive a strong programme of work-related and academic guidance at Key Stage 4 and further first class support and guidance in the sixth form. Newly refined procedures for tracking students' progress have been introduced and there are early signs that these are providing valuable information to students and the school about the progress they are making.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Leadership and management are good. Senior managers work hard and, together with governors, have high expectations of academic standards and behaviour, which are outstanding. Actions have been taken to address areas where performance has been weaker, for example, in science and art. New middle managers have been appointed who are starting to have a positive impact on improving students' progress in these areas.

Senior managers' awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses is good but they have been over optimistic in judging the progress students make. Clear and systematic systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance are in place, but, they are not focused consistently on students' progress. Consequently, improvement in this area is still developing. The school's system for evaluating the quality of lessons is good. However, there are variations in the extent to which observers are effectively evaluating students' learning and the progress they make in lessons. Recently refined assessment systems are enabling more effective tracking and monitoring of students' progress to take place, but they are not being used consistently yet across departments.

The school is well resourced and grants and monies obtained from a range of resources are used effectively to enhance students' learning. The school budget is coming under increasing pressure: a deficit budget has been set for this financial year, which is being carefully monitored. Governors and the school recognise they face some difficult budgetary decisions in the near future. The governing body effectively discharges its responsibilities.



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	1
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	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

4 December 2006

Dear Students

Parmiter's School, High Elms Lane, Garston, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD25 0UU

As you know, your school was recently inspected. Thank you very much for making us so welcome and for the way in which you shared your views with us, both in formal and informal meetings and within lessons. This letter is to tell you about the judgements we made about your school.

The inspection found that Parmiter's School is a really good school and that aspects, such as the sixth form, the curriculum, the support and guidance it provides and the way it looks after your well-being and supports your personal development are outstanding. You are clearly very proud to be able to attend Parmiter's School and appreciate all that it has to offer you. Your parents tell us, and we agree, that the senior managers work hard and together with governors have very high expectations of academic standards and behaviour, which are outstanding. You have excellent attitudes to learning. The school enables you to develop academically and socially. You told us how much you enjoy taking part in the excellent sporting, musical and other extra-curricular activities. Sixth form students willingly take on additional responsibilities and are very good role models for younger students. This was summed up by one sixth former who said, 'We can give back something to the school that has given us so much'. For the school to be even more successful, we believe your staff need to analyse and monitor more closely the progress you are making to ensure you are achieving the best you can in all subjects while you are at the school. You told us you appreciated the information that you are given about the levels you are working at but the new systems that have been introduced are still settling down and not all departments are using them in the same way. We also want teachers to identify clearly when they are planning their lessons how they are going to meet the needs of different groups of students in the class.

You attend a really good school which has a considerable number of outstanding features and you are right to be proud of it.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Brown (Her Majesty's Inspector)