



Parklands High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119764
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291536
Inspection dates 9–10 October 2006
Reporting inspector Sonya Williamson HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Southport Road
School category	Community		Chorley, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	11–16		PR7 1LL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01257 264596
Number on roll (school)	1130	Fax number	01257 261215
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Jayne Yarrow
		Headteacher	Mrs Jean McGrath
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	9–10 October 2006	291536

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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

Parklands is a slightly larger than average school with specialist language college status. It serves a socially mixed area of Chorley and has a genuinely comprehensive intake. The proportions of students entitled to free school meals and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are below average. Few students are from minority ethnic groups and a very small number are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The school is an Investor in People, has a British Council International School Award, Artsmark and a National Healthy School Award. As a consequence of its specialist status, it has family learning programmes in information and communication technology (ICT), Spanish, French and German. School facilities are widely used by the local community.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Parklands is a good school which maintains high standards and continues to raise achievement. Generally, it knows its strengths and areas for development well. The recent improvements in standards, the wide range of appropriate initiatives and the good progress made with issues from the last inspection all indicate that the capacity for improvement is good. The specialist college status and the award of Artsmark have considerably enhanced students' opportunities. There is good access to a range of languages and experiences well designed to promote cultural, social and artistic aspects of students' personal development.

Clear links exist between the good teaching and learning, strong leadership and management, the above average academic standards and high levels of personal achievement. In the few cases where teaching and curriculum management are less strong, students make less rapid progress. A minority of teachers do not make full use of the tracking information provided for them about students' progress, especially if this has not been analysed rigorously at departmental level. There is too much inconsistency in the way that teachers use marking and involve students so that they understand the next steps in their learning. The curriculum has many strengths, particularly in extra-curricular and languages provision and the opportunities for gifted and talented students. However, it is satisfactory overall, rather than good as judged by the school, since it does not entirely meet statutory requirements and is not yet sufficiently flexible to meet the needs and interests of a small minority of middle, lower attaining and less enthusiastic learners. The school provides good levels of care, guidance and support for students and their future well-being. Students feel safe at Parklands and parents recognise its strengths in providing an education which students enjoy.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the pace of curriculum change and range of courses to meet the needs and interests of all students.
- Ensure that teachers make full use of the assessment information available so that students understand how to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Students enter Year 7 with broadly average standards and make good progress, as they move through Key Stages 3 and 4, to reach above average standards when they leave. These levels of standards and achievement have been maintained consistently for the last five years. In 2006, the specialist targets set for languages and those for overall examination and test success were largely met. There are some inconsistencies in the performance of students between subjects. Results in national tests in 2005 and unvalidated test results for 2006 indicate that standards reached in English, mathematics and science at the end

of Year 9 are above average. Students achieved better in English and science than in mathematics. GCSE results in 2005 were above average overall and unvalidated results for 2006 show a similar pattern. In 2006, English results improved further, maintaining the upward trend of recent years. For the students concerned, these results represent good progress from their starting points in Year 7. All groups of students achieved well including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and higher attainers. In 2006 students achieved particularly well in art, history, ICT and religious education but less well in leisure and tourism. The large numbers of students taking two languages achieved well in their first language but less well in their second.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. The majority of students enjoy coming to school and have good attitudes to learning. Attendance is at the national average. Most students behave well and are considerate towards each other, particularly when moving around narrow corridors and in queues at lunchtime. However, in some lessons, where teaching is weaker, the behaviour of some students deteriorates and their pace of learning slows.

Older students spoke enthusiastically about their responsibilities as prefects and about how they helped younger students to settle into school. Year 7 students said they felt safe and incidents of bullying were rare and dealt with quickly. Students of all ages enjoy being members of the school council. Its varied activities include fundraising for local charities and consideration of environmental, sporting and health related issues. Students are clear about the benefits of healthy eating and enjoy the many opportunities the school provides to take regular exercise. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are confident in discussing moral and social issues. They are reflective and able to reach balanced and well informed views. Cultural development is enriched through language studies and the wide variety of visits abroad.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and consequently students make good progress. Students enjoy the varied ways of learning that make many lessons fun. They enjoy working in pairs and small groups and taking part in the discussions that are held in subjects such as English and religious education. Teachers use their considerable subject expertise to plan well-structured lessons, where students make manageable steps in learning. Students understand the purpose of lessons and reflect on their learning at the end of many lessons.

Teachers know their students well and lessons build on what has already been learned. In a small number of lessons, the highest attaining students are not fully challenged because teachers do not take enough account of the useful information they have on what students' already know to plan demanding activities.

Students are set challenging targets to achieve in all subjects. In some subjects, they know their targets and what they have to do to reach them. This helps to raise students' aspirations and give them confidence. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across all subjects and it is stronger in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. The quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent and does not always give clear guidance on how students could improve their work.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they receive much useful targeted support from both class teachers and experienced teaching assistants.

In a small minority of lessons the behaviour of a few students is not well managed and learning is disrupted.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and has good features. Language college status impacts positively on the school's work. All students can study a second language and they experience breadth and variety of cultural learning. The school provides an increasing range of vocational and work-based learning opportunities that is beginning to meet the needs of more students and ensuring that almost all students leave with some qualifications. The small number of lower attaining students benefiting from off-site learning has improved their attendance and some are taking more interest in their education. Many students participate in the very wide range of extra-curricular activities and numerous trips within the United Kingdom and abroad. Higher attainers benefit from extra language and other GCSE subject teaching outside the normal school day. Provision for gifted and talented students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Form tutors deliver a well-structured personal, social and health education programme.

A minority of middle and lower attaining older students, and those at risk of losing interest in their education, are not well catered for because the curriculum is not yet sufficiently well matched to their needs and interests. Further alternative curriculum pathways intended to increase the range of vocational courses are at an early stage of development. Parklands is working appropriately with local schools to offer five specialist diplomas from 2008 but this development will be too late to meet the needs of most current students requiring a more varied curriculum. A citizenship programme is in place but assessment procedures are not fully developed. Statutory requirements for the teaching of religious education at Key Stage 4 are not being met for all students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and very much appreciated by students. The school provides a caring and supportive environment. Policies and procedures to safeguard students are in place and understood and used by staff. Systems for risk assessments and for ensuring a safe working environment are thorough. The many partnerships with outside agencies help provide very good care and support for vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Guidance on the choice of courses at age 14 and 16 and on the routes they can take into careers helps students to make well informed decisions about their futures. Good links with partner schools and institutions ensure a smooth transition for students at each stage of their education. The system for tracking and guiding students' personal development and welfare is good. Students benefit from regular reviews of their personal development and general progress with their form tutors.

Students' academic progress is tracked closely. However, the way pastoral leaders and subject teachers use this information to recognise good achievement and identify and support students who are in danger of underachieving is variable. It is more effective in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good, since they contribute significantly to the above average standards and the consistently good achievement. The senior leadership team work well together to direct improvement. Staff work successfully alongside senior leaders. Consequently, their professional development and strategic awareness are enhanced. The effectiveness of school performance is closely assessed through a variety of suitable strategies such as analysis of test and examination results, lesson observations and departmental checks. Line management by senior leaders and initiatives instigated by the majority of middle managers help to ensure that staff feel supported as well as challenged. This enables most departments to become increasingly effective. Although there are a small number of departments, notably mathematics, which are still in the early stages of effective self-evaluation and development planning, achievement is nonetheless satisfactory. Leaders and managers promote high quality care and good standards of education that ensure there are no significant variations in the achievement of groups of students. There is a shared understanding of improvement priorities. This is achieved through professional development, strategies to share good practice and the way in which key areas for development are prioritised and debated at a range of levels.

Staff are well matched to their teaching responsibilities, so that learners are taught well. Governors provide good support to the school. The resources for learning and the quality of accommodation are good in many areas, particularly in physical education and ICT and this encourages learners' enjoyment. Financial decision making has been

wise, ensuring good value for money. Governors are well informed since the school tells them about curriculum developments and encourages students to speak with them. However, some governors are not fully aware of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school. Effective links are made with a range of partners to enhance learning and care but they are not yet sufficiently well developed to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs and interests of all students.

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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?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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	2
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

The Students

Parklands High School

Southport Road

Chorley

Lancashire

PR7 1LL

9 October 2006

Dear Students

We really appreciated the help you gave us during the inspection of your school. You spoke clearly and confidently with us in lessons and groups and guided us well when we were lost. Thank you for encouraging your parents to complete their questionnaires and for returning so many of them to school. We agree with your parents and your teachers that Parklands is a good school and many of you told us how much you enjoy learning here.

Students get good results at Parklands and you make good progress, whatever abilities you started with, because teaching is strong. You have good opportunities to think, work together, express your views and understand other cultures. You are safe and well cared for. You have good opportunities to learn languages, to do extra lessons after school if you want to and to enjoy the many varied clubs, activities and visits outside lesson times. The headteacher and senior teachers work hard together to make sure that the school continues to improve. They make frequent checks on the quality of what everyone does and try to make sure that you and the staff all play their part.

We have asked your school to make some changes to the subject arrangements and types of courses available for you to study after Year 9. Many older students are happy with the opportunities available but we would like the school to meet everyone's interests. Also, we think it would help you to make even better progress if every teacher made full use of the information they have about what you have achieved in the past when they plan their lessons. We want them to share this with you more, and tell you what you need to do to improve your work and reach your targets.

All of the inspection team wish you every success and happiness for your future.

Best wishes

Sonya Williamson

Her Majesty's Inspector