



The Parkside School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121262
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 292063
Inspection dates 15–16 November 2006
Reporting inspector Alan Lemon

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

Type of school	Special	School address	College Road
School category	Community		Norwich
Age range of pupils	7–16		Norfolk NR2 3JA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01603 441127
Number on roll (school)	139	Fax number	01603 441128
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Susan Woolterton
		Headteacher	Mr Barry Payne
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties but the range of learning difficulties and disabilities is much wider. This includes sensory impairments, physical disabilities, medical conditions, severe learning difficulties and autism. A minority of pupils have a combination of these and several also have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils' level of knowledge and skills when they first start school is well below average but ranges from very low to below average. Almost all pupils are of White British background and there are twice as many boys as girls. A small minority of pupils have to travel long distances to school and many live in areas of social and economic disadvantage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Overall effectiveness is good and the school provides good value for money. All pupils have a good education and their special educational needs are met effectively. The school has a number of excellent features which produce some outstanding results. Parkside is a very popular school. The demand for places is continually increasing and is currently much greater than the school is able to provide. Lots of parents think very highly of the headteacher and staff and many have written praising the school. One parent said, 'It is wonderful to see my daughter so excited about going to school. She is now reading some words, an achievement we did not expect so soon'.

Pupils achieve well, particularly in English, mathematics and science. There is no variation in the achievement of boys and girls or pupils with different learning difficulties. By the end of Year 11, pupils gain good examination results, which show that they have made good progress and have worked up to their capabilities. Throughout the school there are some examples of pupils making excellent progress, for example, in writing and in experimental science. Nevertheless, the monitoring of pupils' progress is not refined enough to enable the school to measure pupils' progress in sufficient detail to ensure it accurately gauges the full extent of pupils' performance. This lack of a refined means of assessing pupils' academic performance places limitations on the level of support the school can provide for them.

Teaching is good and is sometimes outstanding, for example, in English and science. Pupils learn well because they persevere with challenges, their behaviour is excellent and they enjoy their work thoroughly. The curriculum provides pupils with an excellent range of work and activities. The close attention to pupils' personal development and well-being means they very quickly acquire considerable self-confidence and a strong capacity to be independent. They are cared for exceptionally well; there is very good support to help new pupils settle in, improve their independence, and develop the social skills so that they become active contributors in the life of the school and beyond. Due to the high quality of preparation for living healthy lifestyles and keeping safe, pupils leave school exceptionally well prepared for the future.

The good leadership and management give strong direction to school improvement. This is instrumental to the school's success in developing appropriate provision which effectively meets the changing needs and wide range of pupils' learning disabilities. Much has been achieved since the last inspection and the capacity for further improvement is good. The development of excellent partnerships with parents, other schools and a host of professional agencies have created good opportunities to introduce appropriate strategies which effectively meet pupils' needs. The school also plays a key role in helping many local primary and secondary schools to support their pupils who have learning difficulties. Comprehensive monitoring of the school's work is done by senior leaders, staff and governors. The evaluation of the outcomes from this monitoring needs further improvement because the analysis is not always as sharp as it should be, particularly in relation to teaching and learning, to ensure strengths and weaknesses are accurately identified.

What the school should do to improve further

- Rigorously measure pupils' progress and evaluate the outcomes accurately to inform lesson planning and support pupils even more effectively.
- Undertake a sharper evaluation of teaching to determine more accurately the factors which assist or hinder learning and use this information to raise standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

While standards across the school are below national averages due to pupils' learning difficulties, by the end of Year 11 standards are good in relation to pupils' starting points. This is especially so in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils achieve good examination results in a broad range of subjects. This reflects the good progress they make over time because of effective teaching and good attitudes to learning. For several years a good proportion of examination entrants have attained the highest level in Entry Level Certificate mathematics, ICT and design and technology. In addition, in 2006 three higher attaining pupils gained pass grades in GCSE mathematics.

In several lessons good use was made of the targets set for individual pupils. Here, pupils were made aware of what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. As a result, they are encouraged to make the extra efforts that really boost their progress. However, this use and high regard for targets is not consistent in all lessons and, as a result; pupils' achievement is not always as high as it could be.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being is outstanding. Pupils are taught effectively about health, relationships and safety. Consequently boys and girls have a good knowledge and understanding of these issues which helps them to make good life decisions. They have developed a very good awareness of what makes a healthy lifestyle. Pupils know what it means to eat well and many take part in good opportunities for exercise and sports. Their spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. This is due in large part to the extremely good relationships they form with staff and each other, which in turn helps to develop exceptionally positive attitudes to school, foster high regard for others and underpins their outstanding behaviour. Pupils really enjoy school and attendance is good. The school regularly celebrates success in assemblies and pupils spontaneously applaud whenever someone receives praise. They are very considerate of each others' needs, act safely and are confident that when they need help they know where to find it. They learn effectively through many subjects to appreciate different cultures and beliefs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is exceptional in English and science. The teaching of literacy is outstanding because of thorough planning and the expertise of teachers. Most lessons are planned well; teachers give close attention to clarifying lesson objectives but sometimes understanding of the learning outcomes for pupils is not grasped firmly enough. Good specialist teaching skills in practical subjects such as science and design and technology are well developed and these lead to good learning. Assessment during lessons is mostly good; in the best lessons this is closely linked to pupils' targets and pupils contribute to the assessments of their own work and progress. Pupils relate really well to staff. They willingly accept support and the good use made of the skills of classroom assistants significantly contributes to this positive picture. Behaviour, which is sometimes challenging, is managed quietly and very effectively; classrooms are always calm and the school is an orderly community.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The range and quality of work and activities for pupils is outstanding. Enrichment of the curriculum is excellent and all pupils have access to several residential courses. The choice of activities and participation in study support clubs during and after school has increased over the last two years. Provision in the major subjects is excellent, especially in literacy. English as a subject is strong, as is the programme of language support for the large number of pupils with speech and communication difficulties. Pupils have access to a broad choice of examinations, college courses and a sports leader award. Links with mainstream schools provide higher attaining pupils with good opportunities for studying at GCSE level.

Personal, social and health education is well planned. Courses in life skills, independence training, work experience and careers education all add up to excellent provision for pupils in Key Stage 4.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. The school has a strong commitment to safeguarding pupils' health and welfare and makes excellent provision for their care. Behaviour is managed very effectively. Child protection arrangements are in place and procedures for safeguarding children meet legal requirements. The welfare of looked after children is closely monitored. Pastoral support, counselling and therapies support pupils' individual needs very well. An excellent programme exists to help parents manage and support their own child's learning and other needs.

Pupils are given encouragement and support to help them with their work in lessons. They are guided very well regarding their possible future pathways on leaving school. At present, the school lacks an effective way of monitoring the small steps of progress pupils make in lessons. It is developing the means to achieve this but these are not yet fully implemented. As the information currently gathered on pupils' performance does not identify the signs of progress or underachievement with the accuracy needed, the school is not as well placed as it could be to give pupils the highest quality of support possible.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Governance, leadership and management are good. The considerable expertise of staff supported by excellent links with parents, schools and specialist agencies has been very effective in developing and improving a wide range of programmes and resources to meet pupils' needs. This has resulted in a breadth of work and activities, in and out of school, that engages pupils' interest and leads them to thoroughly enjoying many worthwhile challenges. An important part of this is the opportunity for some to attend lessons in mainstream school and for higher attaining pupils to follow GCSE courses there.

The school is active in many monitoring exercises and these are shared by governors, the senior leadership and staff. However, monitoring does not always lead to effective school improvement. The school's comprehensive improvement plan, a product of monitoring, is weakened by some vaguely expressed targets and success criteria. Results from the observation of lessons mostly contribute to good quality teaching. However, the scope for the further improvement of satisfactory teaching is hindered to a degree by limited evaluation of what precisely affects pupils' learning in lessons. Observations check that all the right parts of lessons are planned and in place but they do not always focus on whether all of the essential lesson ingredients are being used effectively to promote learning.

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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?	1
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	3
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

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?	1
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	3
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

17 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Parkside School, College Road, Norwich, NR2 3JA

Thank you for the very warm welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and greatly appreciated the contributions of the groups of pupils who met with us. We want to thank also the pupils who generously gave up their rooms for independence training so that we had a place to work.

What we liked most about your school was:

- the good progress you all make in lessons and your good examination results
- the fact you do so much for yourself, each other, and behave really well
- the many good lessons we watched, especially the excellent ones in English and science
- the excellent choice and variety of activities for you to do in school
- the incredible concern shown by everyone in looking after you and making sure you are happy.

We would like your teachers to:

- find out more about your progress so they can tell you what do to get even better results
- find out more about why some lessons are excellent so that all your lessons can be that good.

Many of your parents have said they think your school is doing a fantastic job and we agree with them. It was a real pleasure to spend time with you in school.

Best wishes.

Alan Lemon and Jenny Hall

Inspectors