

Park Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	129762
Local Authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	293603
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2007
Reporting inspector	William Geoffrey Robson

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	67
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mr R Leonard
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Elmcourt Road London SE27 9BZ
Telephone number	020 7926 0631
Fax number	020 7926 0643

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Park Centre provides for students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. Many students experience behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Most have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. The centre also teaches some students from local secondary schools, for short periods of time, who have been temporarily excluded or are at risk of exclusion. There are considerably more boys than girls and approximately half of the students are of Black Caribbean background and a quarter Black African. Two thirds of students are in Years 10 and 11. Two students have statements of special educational need and there are two looked after children. The centre was formed in 2005 through the amalgamation of two pupil referral units and has not previously been inspected. The headteacher was appointed permanently in 2006 after working in a temporary capacity for one year. Plans have been produced for moving to a new site in two years as part of the building schools for the future initiative.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Park Centre provides a satisfactory education for its students. Since its registration as a new pupil referral unit, the headteacher's clear vision has resulted in good improvement. Staff work well together as a dedicated team. The curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 was initially inadequate but good links have been established with local colleges, businesses and training providers to extend opportunities for students to experience work and vocational courses. As a result, preparation for students' future economic well-being is now satisfactory. Accommodation was also inadequate. The centre still lacks facilities for physical education and design and technology but is bright and well looked after. The local authority has supported the headteacher by making his appointment permanent and clarifying the available budget to ease planning. However, it has not agreed procedures between mainstream schools and the centre to support students' reintegration after they have been excluded. This has a negative effect on students' attitudes and enjoyment. One said, 'I'd like to go back to school but it's not worth bothering because I won't get the chance.' Until this is resolved, the centre only has satisfactory capacity to improve, despite its good track record so far. Self-evaluation is satisfactory but the centre does not use available data systematically enough to evaluate how well it is meeting students' needs.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and enables students to make satisfactory progress. Standards are low because of difficulties that students have experienced in previous schools. Their achievement during their time in the centre is satisfactory. Many students gain several GCSE passes. Those with more severe learning difficulties gain nationally recognised certificates in literacy and numeracy. There is some good teaching but also some shortcomings. In particular, teachers do not consistently share learning objectives with students or remind them of their behaviour targets. Students' behaviour improves during their time in the centre, but not as quickly as it might with more consistent reminders. Some parents are rightly concerned that too many students are excluded for misdemeanours such as using mobile phones without permission. Partly because of a lack of flexible accommodation, the centre does not have enough alternative strategies to manage unacceptable behaviour before resorting to exclusion.

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. They feel safe because they trust teaching assistants in particular to listen to their problems and help them. Good links with outside support agencies provide further support for their physical and emotional well-being. Students know how to live a healthy life but some would like more opportunities to play sports than the centre can provide. When given the opportunity, they contribute well to their own community. For example, Year 11 students thoroughly enjoyed acting as peer mentors to younger students. However, they feel, and the inspector agrees, that they should be given more opportunities to influence decisions in the centre, as the student council no longer meets.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work with the local authority to improve links with mainstream schools, so that more students return successfully to mainstream education.
- Reduce the number of fixed term exclusions from the centre by introducing more strategies to manage inappropriate behaviour.
- Improve the consistency of teaching, especially by ensuring that all teachers set and share targets for students' learning and behaviour.
- Use data to evaluate how well students make progress academically, personally and socially.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Most students enter the centre with very low standards because of the difficulties or frequent exclusions they have experienced in previous schools. Some younger students make slow progress because they have negative attitudes to work and have difficulty in concentrating. Few students reach the standards expected nationally in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests. However, students achieve better the longer they attend the centre. The centre sets challenging targets for their attainment of GCSE grades and most students who attend regularly achieve them. Last year, all in Year 11 who attended for examinations gained at least one GCSE pass in English, mathematics or science. This year, students are on track to do slightly better. Therefore, although standards remain low by comparison with national figures, students' overall achievement is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Some students' behaviour is very challenging when they first arrive at the centre. However, it improves and in Years 10 and 11 most students act responsibly in lessons and during break times. This is partly because they enjoy work more, especially the opportunities for vocational courses. Students' attendance improves slightly during their time in the centre and is satisfactory. However, the number of exclusions is high. Some younger students have more negative attitudes because they see little likelihood of returning to mainstream schools. There is little bullying, and racist incidents are rare. As a result, students feel quite safe and consider that there are members of staff in whom they can confide if necessary. They particularly appreciate the good relationships that they establish with teaching assistants. Students' development of healthy lifestyles is satisfactory and they respond well to healthier food options in the canteen.

Several Year 11 students responded very well to the opportunity to act as peer mentors to younger students. One wrote, 'It's the most positive thing I've done in school and I wouldn't change that for the world.' This is one sign of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is satisfactory overall and is further encouraged through opportunities to discuss and reflect in assemblies and during personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). However, students would appreciate more opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to their own community, as the student council is not currently operating.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers motivate students to take responsibility for their own learning by providing interesting activities. This was seen in the imaginative use of computer software in information and communication technology (ICT) and science lessons. Teachers involve teaching assistants well in their planning and this helps staff to manage classes effectively. All staff establish good relationships with students. This enables them to deal competently with the occasional challenging behaviour,

sometimes by skilfully avoiding confrontation with students. However, teaching quality is inconsistent. Some teachers do not follow the behaviour policy consistently enough and give reward points even when students have not been working well. Teachers are particularly inconsistent in setting precise objectives and reminding students of their learning and behaviour targets. In the induction class, students know exactly what they are expected to achieve and try to assess their own progress at the end of the lesson. By comparison, too many students in other classes are unaware of their targets or what they need to do to improve. Whilst students clearly enjoy some lessons, in others they become bored because teachers over-emphasise the need to complete worksheets rather than providing opportunities for discussion.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The centre provides a satisfactory curriculum, although the number of hours provided are slightly below those recommended for secondary education. Since the reorganisation of the centre, better links with local colleges and businesses have been established. As a result, students now have satisfactory opportunities for work experience and the study of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. A good ICT course further supports students' future economic well-being. However, a few students with more severe learning difficulties need more support with reading and basic literacy. The centre provides a suitable range of accreditation so that all students are able to gain nationally recognised qualifications. A well organised course in personal, social, health and citizenship education helps students to a better understanding of their emotions and feelings during a difficult time in their lives. The centre rightly emphasises the importance of English, mathematics, science and ICT. However, several students say that they would like to study design and technology, music and have more opportunities for physical education. At present, a lack of suitable accommodation and specialist teachers prevents the centre from meeting their wishes. Curriculum links with local schools are inadequate. This hampers many students from returning to mainstream education, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This aspect of the centre's work is satisfactory but there are some good features. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding students are thorough. Good links with a range of agencies enable the centre to provide good support for students with more severe needs. Students also benefit from good advice and guidance for their future careers. As a result, most move on to further education, employment or training when they leave the centre. Students particularly appreciate the support from a learning mentor in Year 11, ensuring that they meet deadlines for course work and revision. However, they lack guidance about how to improve their work and behaviour as teachers do not place enough emphasis on setting and monitoring students' targets. Students are unsure about how well they are doing. The centre makes too much use of fixed term exclusions. For example, many students are excluded too readily for the use of mobile phones without permission because the centre does not have enough alternative strategies to enforce its rules. This adversely affects students' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership by articulating a clear vision for the role and future of the centre which is shared by all members of staff. The centre has clearly improved since it opened. The headteacher has established clear roles and responsibilities for staff that enable them to work as a dedicated team to support students. Accommodation, resources and the curriculum have improved because of better support from the managing board and local authority. The centre's management team is now able to plan more securely for the future since the local authority has delegated more responsibility for the overall budget. However, much remains to be done. There are plans to build a new centre, linked to other schools, but accommodation remains inadequate at present. It restricts opportunities to introduce further strategies for managing challenging behaviour, or to extend the curriculum for students. The local authority has not agreed procedures with local mainstream schools and the centre about the reintegration of excluded students. As a result, very few students return to mainstream schools once they attend the centre.

Procedures for self-evaluation are good in some respects. The centre has identified important priorities for improvement which are reflected in a realistic development plan. Teaching and learning are closely monitored and teachers improve their skills through good opportunities for professional development. However, the centre does not use data systematically in order to evaluate students' achievement or their personal development.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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?	3

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

11 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Park Centre, London, SE27 9BZ

I enjoyed visiting your centre and would like to thank you for making me feel welcome. Thank you also for telling me what you enjoyed about the centre and what you thought could be better. As you know, there are some good things about the centre and the staff work hard to support and help those of you who may be going through a difficult time in your lives. My main finding is that the centre provides a satisfactory quality of education. At the end of the inspection I prepared two lists to show what is good about your education and what could be better.

The things that are done well for you:

- the centre has improved a lot since it opened two years ago and staff have good ideas about ways it can become even better
- staff have developed good links with local colleges and businesses so that you have more opportunities to take vocational courses, work experience and prepare for life after school
- the centre has good links with lots of support services to help them to look after you well.

Some things that could be done better:

- the centre's links with schools need to be better so that more of you can return successfully to mainstream education
- too many of you are excluded from the centre for a few days
- too few of you know your targets or what you need to do to improve your learning or behaviour
- the centre needs to work out more precisely how much progress you are making in your work and your personal development.

You could help staff to reduce exclusions by following the rules about mobile phones and making sure you don't leave the site without permission. You can help teachers by asking them to remind you of your targets and by trying to remember them. Staff know what needs to be done and will be making plans to do it. I hope that you will help them so that you can do even better in the future.

With very best wishes,

Bill Robson (Lead inspector)