



Sir Charles Parsons School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131987
Local Authority Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number 293910
Inspection dates 3–4 October 2006
Reporting inspector Alan Tattersall

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Westbourne Avenue
School category	Community special		Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear
Age range of pupils	11–19		NE6 4ED
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 2630261
Number on roll (school)	118	Fax number	0191 2638897
Number on roll (6th form)	11		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr William Ross
		Headteacher	Mr John Preston
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	3–4 October 2006	293910

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Sir Charles Parsons is a larger than average school that provides for students who have severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. More than a third of students are eligible for free school meals. A small number are in public care. Most students are of White British heritage and a few are of mainly Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage. A few have English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school's effectiveness is outstanding. It provides outstanding value for money. Students join the school with standards well below those expected because of severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school works extremely well with schools, colleges, other agencies and with parents and carers to enhance students' well-being and achievement. The outstanding teaching, curriculum and care enable students to make rapid progress and achieve exceptionally well. Much of this success is due to the thorough checking of each student's progress and making subsequent adjustments to their provision to provide outstanding guidance for students to achieve more. The attention paid to students' individual needs is very impressive and promotes outstanding achievement in both their academic and personal development. As a result, students are extremely well prepared for leaving, since all obtain placements to continue their education in the sixth form or in college. The school ensures that the teaching and learning enable all students, regardless of need or circumstances, to achieve equally well. The richness and range of the curriculum, combined with the outstanding quality of teaching, mean that learning provides enjoyment and excitement combined with the highest achievement. Although students' achievement is outstanding in all subjects, science stands out because students like it so much and look forward to learning even more.

Outstanding provision ensures that students are kept safe. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Students behave impeccably well. The procedures, which start as soon as the students join the school, ensure that they learn to become independent, make choices, take on responsibilities and make an outstanding contribution to the wider community. The very high quality support of other professionals ensures that students' personal development is rapid. Students make outstanding progress in acquiring basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and this provides an excellent basis for their development of economic awareness. Students gain high self-esteem through learning regularly about their frequent success. They gain excellent knowledge about how to stay safe, eat healthily, and exercise to develop healthy lifestyles. A parent summed up a group of parents' and carers' views that, 'Everything that the school does helps students to cope with life after school.'

The school is led and managed extremely well. Leaders and managers work closely as a team to provide the best they can for the students. Governance is good. Governors are active, committed, and fulfil their roles effectively. They contribute significantly to school improvement. There is recognition that they are not focusing consistently on the impact of developments or how these will improve students' learning. The school judges its effectiveness to be outstanding and this is supported fully by the inspection evidence. Nevertheless, there is no complacency among the staff and governors. A commitment to review, evaluate and develop provision means that there is a constant drive for further improvement. The school's performance was rated very highly at the last inspection and it has made exceptional progress since then. As the school has continued to improve, it has on many occasions moved ahead of national

initiatives to make outstanding improvements. The ambitious development plan shows that it has every intention and the skills to be extremely well placed to continue this trend.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

As with the main school, there is a great strength in students receiving lessons from specialist teachers. This ensures the continuity of high standards of teaching and contributes to learners' exceptional achievement. The school is building on the already outstanding curriculum by introducing nationally required changes in provision ahead of similar special schools. The strong links with other schools, colleges of further education and other providers widen learners' choice of courses. Learners enjoy working with staff and students from a local school and this very effectively complements the school's provision for students' outstanding personal development. Learners' outstanding success is evident in their excellent preparation for leaving. It is impressive that last year, all students moved on to further education courses or obtained suitable care placements.

What the school should do to improve further

- The headteacher should provide the governors with the necessary training and opportunities to monitor the impact of the school development plan on raising standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Achievement is outstanding because of the excellent teaching, curriculum, and care that the school provides for each pupil. Students enter the school with standards that are much lower than average because of their learning difficulties. The high level of attention that is devoted to providing work to meet the needs of individual students, through their individual targets, means that all are extremely well challenged. Students make outstanding progress in all areas of learning regardless of their learning difficulties. This includes those students who are from minority ethnic groups, those who have English as an additional language and those in public care. There is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Records show that students up to Year 9 make excellent progress in all subjects in relation to that expected of them. It is similar for students from Year 10 to the sixth form who achieve an outstanding range of accreditation in a wide range of subjects at a higher level than expected. Their success in accreditation increases significantly and better than expected year on year. Progress is tracked and monitored rigorously and this ensures that teachers take this into account to ensure outstanding progress. Students achieve equally well in all subjects but particularly enjoy their success in science, swimming, and ICT and are

enthusiastic to learn more. One pupil was so excited about what he had learnt in a science lesson that he said, 'This is wicked. I want to get the books myself.'

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Throughout their time at the school, students make outstanding progress in developing the personal skills and attributes which help them to get on well in school and in the community. They know how to keep themselves safe and learn to develop a healthy lifestyle. This is encouraged by the many opportunities to participate in sport and games and develop independent travel. Attendance is excellent and is a testament to students' absolute enjoyment of school and their parents' and carers' support. Students appreciate the outstanding opportunities they have to learn from, and with, others in the school community and beyond. They behave outstandingly well and make an extremely good contribution to the school and to the wider community. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is excellent. Students' moral and social development is excellent as a result of exceptional staff support. Students develop a positive attitude to learning beyond the school through frequent opportunities to experience learning in colleges. Consequently, they are well equipped for the next phase of their education and beyond and this contributes outstandingly well to their economic development. They develop an understanding of a range of other cultures and beliefs through many first hand experiences and research on the Internet. Parents and carers know how effectively students develop their multi-cultural development because they are able to attend and share some of the many rich experiences that students receive such as watching the Zulu dancers. Experiences in literature, art and music provide them with a rich cultural experience.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding, enabling students to achieve exceptionally well. Most lessons are taught by subject specialists who plan lessons effectively for students to make progress. Teaching assistants make an excellent contribution to the partnership in lessons and to students' success by directing the support exactly where it is needed.

The school has extremely high expectations to continue to reach for the highest standards in teaching because it underpins how well students achieve. Senior management and subject leaders have ensured that teachers' planning is effective. Teachers have outstanding systems to judge how well students have learnt and what they need to learn next. They make sure that they share with students what they will

learn and inform them how they can make more progress. Staff relate extremely well to students and provide a high level of care for each pupil's needs. They use praise very effectively to encourage further progress. A high proportion of lessons are outstanding. These lessons are exciting and gain students' wholehearted interest. Teachers skilfully prompt students to think, and draw out students' ideas by using well-chosen questions. Occasionally, lessons are good rather than outstanding. They ensure that students learn well, but do not captivate students by arousing their interest and anticipation in what they will learn in the next lesson.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. Students follow a wide range of courses and subjects that enable them to achieve extremely well in a broad range of areas. It is enriched hugely through the numerous clubs, visits, visitors, and themed events. The recent reorganisation of the curriculum for students aged 14 to 19 is innovative. It has enabled students to build on the extensive programme available before September to provide an even wider range of options. Consequently, they have the opportunity to achieve in an outstanding range of accreditation. This includes GCSE, Entry Level, AQA Awards and recognition through the Awards Scheme Development Network. The strong focus on providing lessons led by specialist teachers ensures that high standards are maintained and the process of improvement continues. Many opportunities to learn in mainstream settings complement the extensive personal, social and health education programme. They provide excellent chances for students to develop their outstanding personal and social skills to cope with life in society. Parents are fulsome in their praise that there is a carefully thought out plan for students to learn to be confident and independent from the moment they enter the school. Evidence of the curriculum's outstanding success is found in the fact that it helps pupils to move on successfully to further education, specialist colleges, and other placements.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and contribute strongly to students' progress, enjoyment and well-being. There is careful attention paid to health and safety requirements and child protection systems are in place. There are very effective links with parents and a range of local agencies that safeguard students and provide them with the support they need. Parents and carers are unanimous that the school is a safe and caring place. The school has their total confidence that it guides and supports their children exceptionally well. Guidance given to students through frequently discussing individual targets and education plans ensures that students know what they need to do to improve. The outstanding attention to supporting students' individual needs contributes significantly to their progress in personal development. Staff know the students so well and their skill in preventing incidents

ensure that behaviour in the school is excellent. All staff consistently praise students' achievements. One pupil commented, 'It is great when they tell you that you have done well.' The academic and personal development guidance for students contributes significantly to their outstanding achievement. The school is extremely sensitive in finding the best way of obtaining students' views and it has gained a national award for acting upon their opinions. Currently students have prepared impressive ideas of what they would like to have in the school if they were able to obtain better facilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Excellent leadership and management are central to the school's success in not only maintaining its outstanding achievement but ensuring that it never stops improving. It has not only kept up with national initiatives to raise standards but has led the way on occasions. This is particularly evident in the success in assessment where it advises others. This bodes well for its continuing success. The headteacher works in a highly skilled way. He has worked extremely effectively with the senior management team to spread leadership and management skills throughout more staff. This ensures that all members of the school community are fully involved in accurately evaluating performance and devising ways forward. In all actions, leaders ensure that the emphasis is kept on creating opportunities to raise students' achievement even higher. Staff are fully committed to the shared vision of constantly raising their expectations. Although the school recognises the need to find a solution to make up for some deficient facilities, this does not stand in the way of achievement. A good example of this is the creation of an exceptionally good swimming pool which has made a significant contribution to students' learning. That is because the school makes such outstanding and imaginative use of its existing resources. The school has forged extensive and valuable partnerships with schools, colleges, and organisations to build on its success and provide for students. Governance of the school is good. Governors are strong supporters of the school and deal well with the changes in policies and procedures required of them. They make a strong contribution to strategic development. However, the headteacher should provide the governors with the necessary training and opportunities to monitor the impact of the school development plan on raising standards.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	1	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	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
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	1

The quality of provision

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

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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
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

Sir Charles Parsons School

Westbourne Avenue

Newcastle upon Tyne

Tyne and Wear

NE6 4ED

3 October 2006

Dear Students

Thank you for making me welcome in your excellent school. I enjoyed joining you in your lessons and looking at your work to see what you were doing. You were very helpful when you told me about your school. You like all your teachers, staff and lessons. There is nothing that you do not like about the school.

I agree with you that you make great progress and do really well. You enjoy lessons because they are interesting. I was pleased that you especially asked me to come to see you in swimming, science, and ICT because you love the subjects so much. You have a wonderful swimming pool and so many of you are great swimmers. I can see why you wanted me to come to science lessons to see you being 'scientists' and doing experiments. Your teachers are excellent and they plan exciting lessons for you. You do interesting things and learn extremely well. I agree with you that you do wonderful things in your ICT lessons. You must like ICT because the computer clubs are full at lunchtimes.

Your parents and carers agree with you that the school keeps you safe. This means that you can go confidently to all the colleges, visits, and adventure courses. Your attendance is so good because you do not want to miss a day. The school makes sure that you obtain lots of certificates to recognise your success. You are prepared outstandingly well for leaving and go on to colleges and other places to learn more.

Your school is so good that I have only asked it to do one thing to improve.

I have asked the governors to look more at how the improvements the school makes are helping you. I am sure that you will help the governors to see the improvements, since you were so helpful to me.

Good wishes for the future!

Alan Tattersall

Inspector