

Parkside School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132217
Local Authority	Bradford
Inspection number	301370
Inspection dates	16–17 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Josephine Nowacki HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1060
6th form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steven Leach
Headteacher	Dr T Rickwood
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	Parkside Terrace Cullingworth Bradford West Yorkshire BD13 5AD
Telephone number	01535 272752
Fax number	0

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Parkside School, created in 2000, is a larger than average comprehensive school situated on the outskirts of Bradford. The school is oversubscribed. The majority of students are White British. The number of students who speak English as an additional language is very low. Standards on entry to the school are average. The number of students entitled to free school meals is much lower than average. At the time of the inspection the percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (including those with statements of educational need) was higher than the national average.

Parkside is a specialist performing arts college and has the Gold Artsmark and the Healthy Schools awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Parkside School provides a satisfactory and improving quality of education. Since its creation in 2000, the school has faced some very trying times. A huge building project, which took much longer to complete than initially planned, and significant staffing issues have resulted in the school making slower progress than might be expected. Nevertheless, there is good capacity for improvement because of the strong leadership and management of the headteacher and the dedication of an experienced senior leadership team. The school is now emerging from its period of difficulty, and recent initiatives are beginning to bear fruit. Overall standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. However, current inspection evidence and the school's own data indicate that standards are rising, and the school is back on track to achieve its targets. Nevertheless, senior leaders realise that there is still more to do to raise standards and improve achievement further.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and an increasing amount is good. In the main this is because of the well developed system of continuous professional development that is focused on improving classroom practice. Good teaching and learning are particularly evident in the schools' specialist subjects, but also in other areas such as English, physical education (PE) and modern foreign languages. However, senior leaders are aware of the need to increase the amount of good and better teaching across the whole school to ensure standards are high in all subjects. The use of assessment information to set targets and monitor students' progress is effective in Key Stage 3, but is still in the early stages of development in Key Stage 4.

Students' personal development and well-being are good and this is a particular strength of the school. All students, including the most vulnerable and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, receive high quality care and support. Throughout the difficult circumstances the school has faced in recent years, staff have worked hard to provide a welcoming school environment where students feel safe and very well cared for. Attendance is good. Students behave well in classes and have positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour around the school is only satisfactory because of a small but significant number of students whose immature and inappropriate behaviour is often overly boisterous.

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. Recent changes in Key Stage 4 have resulted in provision that is much better suited to the wide range of students' abilities. It is too soon to measure the full impact of these changes although most students say they welcome the broader choices they have. Enrichment opportunities are extensive, enhanced greatly by the school's specialist performing arts status, and very much appreciated by students.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a good understanding by senior leaders of the school's strengths and where it needs to improve. Recent restructuring at middle management level is beginning to pay dividends. However, processes and systems aimed at raising achievement are not yet fully embedded at this level in all areas. There remain some inconsistencies in practice, especially in the monitoring and review of performance at departmental level. Governors provide appropriate challenge to the school. They are knowledgeable and their very effective support has helped the school to improve.

The school's specialist performing arts status is highly effective in improving students' self-confidence. This is resulting in students' having a positive attitude in other subjects and contributing to rising standards. Students say they are proud to be educated at Parkside because

they consider it to have the best performing arts facility in Bradford. Resources are used well and the school provides satisfactory value for money overall.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory and includes an improving range of vocational options at intermediate and advanced level.

Standards at GCE AS and A level are broadly average, and above average for vocational courses. Students' achievement is satisfactory overall and it is good and sometimes outstanding in vocational qualifications in business, health and social care, and performing arts. Teaching and learning are satisfactory; the level of work is sometimes pitched too low and students are not given enough challenging tasks to improve their rate of progress.

Students say they enjoy sixth form life very much. Their personal development is good. Sixth formers make a significant contribution to the life of the school and serve as positive role models for younger students. They run drama clubs, organise whole school events and often provide reading and learning support in class. Their work in keeping the local area clean is an example of their contribution to the wider community.

Attendance is improving because of more rigorous monitoring procedures introduced by the new head of sixth form. The number of students who stay on their courses is increasing as is the number of students choosing to progress from Year 11 into the sixth form. Students speak warmly of the good care and support they receive. Guidance is satisfactory. Tutors are beginning to monitor progress more effectively, but actions to improve are not focused enough to be helpful to individual learners.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory; the new head of sixth form has a clear sense of direction and is beginning to tackle weaknesses in this provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase further the amount of good and better teaching across the school to ensure high standards in all subjects.
- Embed the process for target setting and monitoring students' progress in Key Stage 4 so that students know how they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Ensure that strategies to raise achievement are implemented consistently and monitored rigorously at middle management level.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. In 2005, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 were above the national average and students achieved well. Since then, standards in this key stage have declined but remain around the national average. During their first three years in the school, the progress students make fluctuates, although it is generally better in English than in mathematics and science.

Standards in Key Stage 4 improved to around national average levels in 2006 but fell significantly below in 2007 and the school did not meet its targets. The percentage of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grade C and above, including English and mathematics, was above national

average in 2005 and 2006. However, this percentage fell to national levels in 2007. Results in the school's specialist subjects, namely drama, music, dance, art and design, and photography are high and generally better than results in other subjects. In 2007, most students including those with statements of special educational needs made satisfactory progress, but boys, especially those of lower and average ability, did not make the progress they could.

Clear actions and strategies have been implemented to redress the dip in standards. The school believes that it is now back on track to achieve its targets. Inspectors agree. Evidence from the inspection shows that current achievement for most students, including that of boys, is satisfactory with an increasing proportion that is good. This is because of the high priority the school has given to improving teaching and learning and the better use of data to set targets and monitor students' progress, particularly in Key Stage 3. However, the school is aware that it still has some way to go to ensure that its strategies to raise achievement are applied consistently across the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The personal development and well-being of the students are strengths of the school. Their spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good overall although the spiritual aspect is less developed. Students enjoy school and particularly the experiences provided through the school's specialist subjects such as dance and drama. Attendance is good. Students have good attitudes to learning and they behave well in lessons. However, inspectors agree with many parents that the behaviour of a significant minority of students is not always as good as it should be around school. Despite this, students say that they feel safe and report that there are few instances of bullying; those that occur are dealt with swiftly.

As a result of the school's initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles, students have an excellent understanding of the need to eat healthily and participate in regular exercise. Students make a good contribution to the life of the community and this is enhanced through the school's specialist status. For example, students, including those in the sixth form, organise drama events within school and with the local community. Charity work is well developed. For example, Parkside students worked with others to provide a new school for Tsunami victims in Sri Lanka. The school council is active; members have a particularly good understanding of the financial costs of running a large school!

The enthusiasm of students to take responsibility for running various events, the work of the school council and the involvement of students in charity work promote their readiness for work and life after school very effectively.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some strong features. Recent initiatives to raise the profile of teaching and learning are beginning to impact positively on standards and achievement. However, the full impact of the school's actions will take longer and the

school knows there is still an element of satisfactory teaching which it needs to tackle. The strengths of teaching include good subject knowledge, good relationships and a level of challenge that matches the ability of each member of the class. Where planning is good and appropriate tasks are matched to individual learners' needs the lessons move with pace and there is enjoyment for students. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, confident teaching and well directed questions helped students to understand the different skills that must be demonstrated to achieve higher grades. A Year 7 PE lesson provided students with the opportunity to organise a football tournament, which they did with great energy and enthusiasm and highly effective teamwork. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and make similar progress to that of their peers. In satisfactory lessons there is too much talking by the teacher, insufficient challenge and too few opportunities for students to get involved in learning.

Across both key stages the quality of assessment varies and not all students benefit from the diagnostic marking that helps them to know what level they are at and how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with a number of strengths reflecting the school's specialist status in expressive arts. All statutory requirements are met. In Key Stage 3 the curriculum is broad and balanced and includes good provision in drama and dance. All students in this key stage can follow two modern foreign languages. There is good provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a specific curriculum 'pathway' to ensure that they receive targeted support throughout the school.

The school has recently reviewed its Key Stage 4 curriculum because their analysis of results in 2007 indicated that some students were on courses that did not match their needs or abilities. The revised and much improved curriculum provides five pathways and is better suited to different types of learners. There are now more vocational options, the chance to study, on one day a week, for accredited qualifications at the local college or placements at external training providers. Students whose focus is more academic are equally well catered for. However, the full benefits of the revised Key Stage 4 curriculum are yet to be realised and a detailed assessment of the impact will take longer.

The school provides a variety of extra-curricular activities and students benefit from a broad range of residential and other off-site visits that enrich the opportunities provided locally. The specialist performing arts programme makes a strong contribution to this extra-curricular provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school provides very good care and support for all its students. Care, especially for those who are most vulnerable and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly strong. These students are supported through a dedicated curriculum pathway which provides them with a safe, supportive learning environment. Support for all students is securely

underpinned by extensive links to external support agencies. Typically, a parent commented that Parkside has an 'outstanding school ethos that places students at the centre of everything that it does.' Child protection procedures are very well established and safeguarding procedures are in place. Health and safety arrangements, including risk assessments, are robust.

The procedures to monitor and track students' progress towards their targets are in place and are good in Key Stage 3 and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It is not as strong in Key Stage 4; the school is aware of the need to address this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some significant strengths. The headteacher's vision for the future is clear, and in this he is well supported by a dedicated and experienced senior leadership team. Although a relatively new school, it has experienced many changes and faced significant difficulties, including a huge building project and considerable staffing issues. This has hindered the rate of progress in some aspects of the school's work. However, the headteacher's strong leadership and calm, palpable sense of purpose has maintained an ethos of caring for and including every student in the school, whatever the circumstances.

Senior leaders are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Where improvements are needed, appropriate actions are taken. Some measurable improvement is already taking place. However, some remedies are new and have not had sufficient time to impact fully. The recent restructuring at middle management level is leading to an improvement in standards. However, these roles have yet to be fully embedded and there are inconsistencies in the way that some middle managers monitor and share good practice, particularly in teaching and learning. As a result of this, departmental self-review is less rigorous and effective than it is at senior level.

The governors are supportive, knowledgeable and appropriately challenging. They are very proud of their school and what it has achieved.

The school's specialist performing arts status makes a significant contribution to the community it serves, but above all, to students' enjoyment and their personal development.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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	3	
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

Thank you very much for welcoming us into your school during the recent inspection. We appreciated the time so many of you spent talking to us about your life and work at Parkside School. As a result of our visit, we have identified a number of strengths and areas for improvement.

- Many of you are making at least satisfactory progress and the number of you making good progress is increasing.
- You enjoy school and have good attitudes to learning.
- You particularly like the performing arts subjects and say that you have the best facilities in Bradford!
- The headteacher is a strong leader who has managed the school well even through some very trying times. The deputy headteacher, other senior managers and all staff work very hard to make sure the school is a welcoming and safe place to be.
- There is a lot of good teaching, especially in the school's specialist subjects, but we think there is still quite a bit that is satisfactory.
- The new curriculum arrangements in Years 10 and 11 are good. There is a wider choice than in the past and the school thinks that this will help more of you to gain more qualifications and achieve well in the future.
- Your behaviour in lessons is good, and it is generally satisfactory around school.
- Your attendance is good.

This is what we have asked the school to do:

- make sure all teaching is good or better so that you all do as well as you can
- ensure that students in Key Stage 4 know what their targets are and that teachers give them better information about how to improve their work and reach their targets
- improve the way some managers check the work of their departments.