

Parkwood Hall School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100548
Local Authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	307411
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell

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

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Peter Daniel

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	7–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	78
Sixth form	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ray Harris
Principal	Mr Nick White
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2003
School address	Beechenlea Lane Swanley BR8 8DR
Telephone number	01322 664441
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Age group	7–19
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Introduction

The inspection of the school was carried out by an Additional Inspector and that of the boarding provision by a Social Care Inspector.

Description of the school

Parkwood Hall is a residential, co-educational, community special school for learners with a statement of special educational needs relating to moderate and severe learning difficulties. It has a wide catchment area throughout Greater London and Kent. Approximately two thirds of pupils are boarders. An increasing number of pupils also have autistic spectrum disorder identified on their statement. Boys outnumber girls by approximately 3:1. Two thirds of the learners are White British and a range of other minority ethnic groups are represented. Twelve pupils are looked after. The school has Artsmark Gold status and, since September 2008, it has been granted Specialist School status for the performing arts.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Parkwood Hall is a good school. The learners make good progress in their learning and their personal development is outstanding. Inevitably, due to their learning difficulties, the standards reached by learners are exceptionally low but they achieve well in relation to their starting points. The good boarding provision also has a positive impact upon the boarders' achievements, personal development and well-being.

The quality of teaching is good and is typified by use of a wide range of communication methods and consistent application of specialist knowledge of the learners' special educational needs. Much of this work is complemented by regular access to relevant professional development. Teaching assistants, some of whom have advanced skills and qualifications, make a significant contribution to the learners' achievement. Occasionally, some lessons do not have the good pace, opportunities for first-hand experience or high expectations of learners that are typical elsewhere.

The vast majority of learners meet their challenging targets and, where they do not, the school promptly acts, following regular reviews of individual progress. Learners enjoy coming to school and parents are very happy for their children to attend. Comments from parents included, 'The school has been most helpful to us as well as our child...they make sure the children are accepted not merely tolerated...It's a fabulous school'.

The curriculum is good. It is enriched by access to the community and a wide range of extra-curricular activities, principally for boarders, but also accessible to all on a more limited basis. Residential school journeys offer a wealth of learning experiences. Opportunities for wider accreditation and external work-related learning are missed for some of the more able older learners in Key Stage 4. Learners make excellent progress in their personal development due to the well-integrated provision of Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education and high-quality support and guidance. They enthusiastically take up responsibilities when provided and express choices when offered. Membership of the school council and steel band is taken seriously; no encouragement is needed to ensure attendance at practice or rehearsals. The performing arts are a major strength of the school and offer extensive opportunities for learners to contribute to the wider community and in turn the community gains a first-hand appreciation of the learners' diverse abilities and needs.

The overall quality of care, guidance and support provided for all is excellent. The school's monitoring and tracking of overall achievement has improved significantly since the last inspection and is a key factor in the academic progress made. School procedures, including those for child protection, ensure learners' well-being is appropriately safeguarded. Careers education and transition planning prepare learners very well for moving from one stage to the next. The key role of the school's liaison and inclusion manager is pivotal in this regard, although some learners from some local authorities do not currently receive sufficient external careers support. Learners receive very effective specialist support, including speech and language therapy, to improve their access to the curriculum. Other therapies have a positive impact on their emotional well-being. Some subject reports contain too little progress information as part of the annual review procedures.

In the two years since his appointment, the principal has shown good leadership and has given the school a clear direction for further improvement based on an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. He is ably supported by his recently appointed deputy who has developed a more

rigorous system of continued professional development. The senior leaders have increasingly well-distributed managerial roles. The relevant subject managers for the performing arts have been very effective in securing specialist school status. The benefits of the school's specialist status are extended beyond the school and learners in other schools and organisations. The governing body gives good support on all school and boarding issues. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and also has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provides a good quality of education. The students' achievements are good, as shown by the awards they gain within the National Skills Profile related to life and learning. The curriculum is good and relevant to the students' needs. School-based lessons include literacy, numeracy, horticultural and retail studies, which retain a strong emphasis on the development of communication and of independence skills.

Attendance at a local college of further education is a relevant part of the students' curriculum, although its impact is weakened by a lack of written reports about the progress they make. Although the current awards are relevant, the range of awards is too narrow and does not truly reflect the range of ability within the sixth form. As a result of the good teaching they receive and the excellent care, guidance and support, students' personal development is outstanding. Where possible, they make highly valued contributions to the local community through public performances and a range of work-related experiences. Leadership and management are good. Roles have recently been reorganised following staff changes. Nevertheless, the sixth form is supported by the school's senior leadership team to good effect. The sixth form makes best use of its limited accommodation in the main school. Firm plans are in place to improve the position in the near future.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The quality of boarding at Parkwood Hall School is good. There are some outstanding areas and the school meets the majority of the National Minimum Standards. The school's management, the strong sense of community and the involvement by staff and students, contribute effectively to the promotion of the students' welfare. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There are a representative number of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school provides a range of ethnic foods, celebrates religious festivals and provides cultural activities. The school uses appropriate communication techniques such as Signalong and Picture Exchange cards. Clearly written policies and procedures underpin the school's practice. The school's management acknowledges the need to further consolidate its good practice around safeguarding children. It also recognises the need to enhance the training of middle managers and the importance of their role in relation to staff supervision. The school has taken appropriate action to address the majority of the recommendations contained in the previous inspection report.

There is excellent provision for promoting the health of students. Clear procedures are followed regarding the management and administration of medication. Students are registered with a GP, dentist and optician and undergo annual medical checks. The school has health promotion days, for example an oral health day and a head lice day. There is a weighing-in clinic for students with weight problems. The school nurse runs classes on physical and sexual health.

Students are offered healthy balanced diets that cater for their individual needs. They also participate in a range of healthy activities.

There are robust recruitment practices. All staff are subject to Criminal Record Bureau checks. Boarders feel safe at the school. Though some bullying takes place, staff are properly addressing such problems and monitoring the situation. The school uses rewards and sanctions to modify behaviour. Staff are child-centred and relationships between students and staff are mutually respectful. The school has a designated child protection person. Staff have a good understanding of child protection and are aware of reporting procedures. The school intends to ensure that safeguarding training is continually updated to keep abreast of practice. There are excellent monitoring systems for managing restraint, bullying, sanctions, significant incidents and complaints. Despite a recommendation from the previous inspection, a night practice drill has still not been carried out.

The school is actively involved in promoting educational achievement and personal development. All boarders have an individual education plan that sets out educational targets. Students attend on site education but also take part in numerous extra-curricular activities. These include lunchtime and evening enrichment programmes within the school and attendance at activities within the community. The school has excellent provision for students to express their views both formally and informally. Boarders are represented on the school council, attend their Looked After Review and Annual Review, meet with their link worker and take part in house meetings. Boarders also know who to refer to, if they have a problem. They are familiar with the school's Complaints Policy.

The school has a strong commitment to preparing boarders for the transition to adulthood and has a separate residential unit for young people over 17 years where the objective is to support and prepare them for independence. The unit has been upgraded since the last inspection and has had an extension built. The boarders undergo a social skills assessment. Looked after children are subject to a Pathway Plan. The unit has a programme to encourage students to develop their self-care skills. Boarders are encouraged to move on to colleges of further education. Young people have pupil passports, containing information that goes with them to their next placement. Young people are referred to Connexions. The school also has excellent links with residential and day colleges.

The school is organised and managed in a manner that delivers good childcare. The principal has qualified teacher status and a national professional qualification for headship. He is undertaking Leadership and Management qualifications. The school is adequately staffed by a competent and experienced staff group. All staff have NVQ 3 qualifications or are currently doing the training. There is a vacancy for the head of residential education. The post is being advertised. At present, the principal and deputy principal share duties for managing care in the boarding units. In light of their existing duties, this may mean that they cannot always give their undivided attention to all care matters. There is also a vacancy for a residential manager. Staff at middle management level have not had NVQ management training at level 4 or the equivalent. This has had consequences for their progression into management roles. Regular staff supervision is not consistent. The situation does have consequences for the monitoring of staff's personal development plans and feedback on performance. All residential education officers and assistants are working through the Community Workforce Development Council. Residential staff take part in in-service training days. The monitoring of the school is undertaken by governors under standard 33.2 who report to the principal and the governing body. The school is also monitored through management meetings. The principal and deputy principal have regular contact with the boarding units and make it their responsibility to obtain feedback

by talking with staff and students. Children's files and staff records are in good order and stored in a confidential area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities for accreditation and offsite work-related learning in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
- Ensure that all teaching and subject management is equally effective across the whole school.
- In liaison with the relevant local authorities, ensure all learners have appropriate levels of careers support.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- Ensure that fire drills include a night-time evacuation of the school and other buildings (NMS 26).
- Ensure that staff receive ongoing comprehensive training in relation to current safeguarding practice (NMS 29).
- Ensure that priority is given to filling the vacancy for the head of residential education in order that the school is managed and staffed in a manner that delivers the best possible childcare (NMS 31.1).
- Ensure all care staff, temporary staff and ancillary staff working in the school receive at least one and a half hours one-to-one supervision from a senior member of staff each half term. In addition, new staff should receive supervision at least fortnightly during the first two terms (NMS 30.2).

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The range of ability on entry is exceptionally wide, ranging from pre-National Curriculum levels (P-levels) to lower levels of the National Curriculum. The standards attained by learners are inevitably exceptionally low due to their special educational needs. Nevertheless, in relation to their starting points, learners' achievements are good, irrespective of their gender or ethnic origin. Some older learners record good progress within the National Skills Profile. The vast majority of learners make good progress in meeting challenging targets in their individual education plans.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Learners make outstanding progress in their personal development and well-being as they respond so well to the excellent relationships between themselves and staff, displaying very positive attitudes. Unauthorised absence is rare and attendance levels are good. Learners respond exceptionally well to the many opportunities in the performing arts and other cultural opportunities in and out of school. They have a good understanding of the value of exercise and the requirements of a healthy lifestyle contained in the personal, health and social education programmes. Many responded, for example, to the requests for comments on meals. The concerns about portion size expressed by some older students received due consideration.

The learners feel safe and know they have a trusted adult with whom they can share concerns during the school day and evenings. Behaviour is good in class and around the school. Membership of the school council is taken seriously and is representative of the school roll. Racial harmony and close friendships are very evident throughout the school community.

Assemblies and cross-curricular themes ensure that all have a good awareness of cultural diversity.

All learners, and especially boarders, make excellent use of the community for arts, sports and recreation. They regularly contribute to the cultural development of others by their splendid steel band performances. A small number of learners represent the school very well in other schools and one individual has recently won gold medals in swimming at the World Youth Games.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good working relationships between teachers, learners and all other adults in the room underpin the quality of lessons. Learners receive good quality support, including, where appropriate, one-to-one support, 'signing' or the use of specific communication aids, including picture exchange. There is a good level of staff expertise to ensure that the skills of all are adequately maintained. This includes information and communication technology, behaviour management and the use of structured activities for specific groups of learners.

Effective and challenging questions, as well as constructive praise, help ensure learners are on task and making good progress. Though teachers' planning has a focus on ensuring all learners progress as well as they should, the work set does not always challenge higher-attaining learners enough. For example, in a physical education lesson, expectations were not as high as those typically found in the school. The pace was slow and there were too few opportunities for learners to practise skills, despite there being adequate equipment. Furthermore, not all staff ensure that learners routinely change into suitable clothing for activities. Increasingly good use is made of assessment for learning whereby learners reflect upon how much they have learned at the end of lessons. In some classrooms, bright and colourful displays, including learners' work enhance the quality of the learning environment.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The National Curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of all learners. For Key Stages 2 and 3, the curricular planning is based on foundation programmes for young learners. There is a clear focus on communication, language, literacy and numeracy as well as on learners' personal development. Where appropriate, relevant sensory experiences are provided, for example in English and physical education. In Key Stage 4, the approach is more subject-based while retaining a strong emphasis on communication and independence skills. However, there are few opportunities for the more able Key Stage 4 learners to access external work experience or more challenging accredited courses. The provision for the performing arts is outstanding as is the contribution made by the extra-curricular activities provided for boarders, some of which may be accessed by day pupils. The curriculum is also enriched by offsite residential visits that successfully broaden learners' experience and enjoyment of their education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The wide range of support and guidance offered by the school results in learners who are happy to attend, who behave well, and who develop in confidence and independence as they progress through the school. Close working relationships with a wide range of other specialist agencies and professionals contribute extensively to learners' development and well-being. The school nurse ensures learners' medical needs are met. The role of the school's liaison and inclusion manager is highly effective in bridging the inevitable distances between many parents and the school. Regular handover meetings ensure a good exchange of information between residential and care staff. Some teachers also work in the houses and this too helps to develop a rounded picture of boarders' development. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show it is clear that the school enjoys wholehearted support from parents and carers. One commented, 'He is a different child since he's been there.'

There is a very high level of care, guidance and support. Arrangements for child protection are effective. The procedures for monitoring academic progress have much improved and play a key part in modifying the regularly reviewed individual education plans. The quality of reporting progress is good, although less useful in some areas, for example science, physical education and some courses undertaken at a further education college. Reasons beyond the school's control mean that full careers guidance and support is currently not available to all learners and this has an adverse effect on planning for when they leave school. Nevertheless, due to the strength of the overall provision, the learners are very well prepared for moving on. The school's recognition as a Healthy School also reflects the concern for the well-being of its community.

The school has excellent links with external agencies, including therapists. The provision for speech and language therapy is exemplary. For example, the speech and language therapist opted to work flexible hours to gain access to both the school and residential experiences. This helps to ensure that relevant targets are set and monitored in a wide range of settings.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The principal gives good leadership to his staff and is well supported by his deputy principal. Although both are relatively new to the school they have recognised what the school needs to do to improve further, such as the development of other managers' abilities to help drive the school forward. This also includes oversight of science and physical education for which there are currently no suitably qualified leaders. However, subject leaders for English and music have been highly effective in securing specialist schools status for the Performing Arts. Although this status is a recent award, the school is making good progress towards its targets that include work with other schools and other institutions. Additional accreditation in this area is also being introduced this year.

The leadership team have taken a pragmatic approach to covering for the absence of the head of residential education and have suitable plans to increase the emphasis on education within the residential provision without reducing its commitment to care. The school displays an outstanding commitment to community cohesion as evidenced by life within the school and its attention to other cultures and languages. In the wider community, the school has strong

links with other schools and its own local authority who benefit from school performances and gain a wider appreciation of diversity and special educational needs. The governing body possesses highly relevant skills and knowledge to offer good all-round support. The school's finances are well managed and appropriately audited.

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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?	2	2
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?	1	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
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	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

25 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Parkwood Hall School, Swanley, BR8 8DR

Thank you for making me and my colleague so welcome last week. It was a real pleasure for us to see just how well you are doing in your good school and houses.

It is clear that you enjoy your lessons and make good progress in your work. All the staff work hard to help you learn. The quality of teaching is good, as are the lessons you are given. The after school activities are outstanding. We found you to be well behaved and your attendance is good.

We know the school has plans to improve the accommodation, especially for the sixth form. You told us about all the things you enjoyed about being at Parkwood and I've passed on how some of you older students may like more food at meal times. I know you enjoy responsibilities as school councillors and members of the steel band. I have to tell you that the band's performance was one of best things I have seen in any school anywhere in the country. You are right to be proud of yourselves and I know how much everyone else appreciates your music and drama productions. The school does all it can to make sure you keep fit and healthy. The staff also help your parents so that they may learn to help you at home.

I am asking the school to do a few things to help the school be even better for you. One is to see that all the subjects you learn and the lessons you have are as good as the best. Another is to give those of you who are older more chances to gain awards and do work experience in the community. And, finally, to see that all of you get the right support in planning for leaving school.

Your preparations for Red Nose Day were going well, so I hope you raised lots of money for the good causes! I've also asked the Principal if this letter can be written with pictures as well to help some of you read it.

Yours faithfully

Greg Sorrell

Lead Inspector