

# Park School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105146
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	308778
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Adrian Simm

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	20
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J Gregory
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 February 2004
<b>School address</b>	18 Spa Road Bolton Lancashire BL1 4AG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 333700
<b>Fax number</b>	01204 332418

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<b>Age group</b>	11-16
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; the features of teaching and learning and the curriculum that lead to high academic and personal achievement; and the effectiveness of leadership and management in meeting pupils' individual learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation (SEF), external evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school's own assessment records, relevant policies, observations of the school at work, including visits to lessons and parents' questionnaires. Discussions were held with staff, pupils and the line manager of the teacher in charge. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments as given in its SEF, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

The unit operates in a small number of rooms within the Bolton Lads and Girls Club. It teaches up to 20 pupils who have a broad range of complex psychological, social and emotional difficulties. All pupils remain on the roll of their mainstream schools. Around a half have mental health problems and severe social anxieties. About one fifth of pupils have statements of special educational needs. After an introductory period, pupils attend the unit full-time. All pupils on the current roll are of White British heritage. The unit has recently gained the Healthy Schools Award and the Leading Aspect Award for its work in literacy and numeracy.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils know they matter. Parents and pupils recognise that because the school is very small in comparison with previous schools attended, each pupil receives much more support that is designed just for them. Individualised learning is the key feature of the school's extremely effective practice. The school focuses rightly on pupils' personal development with exceptional success, which then impacts very positively on their learning and achievement. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Many who start at the school with school phobia, anxiety or depression and on a part time basis, soon recognise they can cope with the increased expectations placed upon them. After a short period, a large majority attend on a full-time basis. School attendance by these pupils that previously was patchy, improves very well. Attendance overall is good with most absence related to specific health needs. Pupils respond quickly to the very caring and structured support designed for each one of them. As a result, they become more mature, get on together and behave well overall. On rare occasions, very short exclusions are used to make a point to pupils about more extreme behaviour. This is kept to a minimum and no exclusions have happened so far this school year.

Despite their individual needs, pupils have a tremendous group spirit which is summed up by a poster in the school that pronounces, 'there is no I in team'. Pupils contribute exceptionally well to the smooth running of their school community and come to understand the needs of others very well. They socialise at lunchtime with the general public in the cafeteria of the Bolton Lads and Girls Club, sit and talk to each other about everyday events and raise money for charities. Their charity work is integral to their personal and social education through investigating and understanding more about the needs of the people they are helping both at home and abroad. Academic work and personal development intertwine so that learning builds carefully in supporting their future health, safety and well-being: economically, morally and socially. Pupils come to understand themselves much better and, through this, make the strides forward that result in their exceptional success in academic and vocational examinations. If appropriate, pupils return to mainstream schools, but the vast majority leave the school at the end of Year 11 and go on to further education.

The leadership and management of the teacher-in-charge and her deputy are outstanding. They ensure that every minute of the day is a learning experience. Pupils work on a carefully prepared balance of individual and group work. This balance supports those who are at the early stages of reading, writing and mathematics as well as those who are working towards GCSE standards. Pupils say they find their individual targets for improvement challenging and very useful, commenting, 'When you achieve them, you actually feel you have done something.' Regardless of their starting points, all pupils, including those with statements of special educational need, achieve exceptionally well in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology and personal, social and health education. Standards climb from their low starting points overall on entry to below average and on occasions average levels by the time they leave. Teaching and learning is extremely effective. Pupils are very clear about what is expected of them in their learning and they concentrate hard in order to achieve these expectations. One particularly enthusiastic group observed gained much from their poetry lesson.

They discussed and were appreciative of one pupil's writing from a previous lesson about 'magical meteorites'. Another group were impressive in their understanding of a range of

presentational techniques used in advertising. Given the small number of staff in the school, they cover a broad range of subjects very successfully so that all pupils gain accreditation appropriate to their levels. For example, of those Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2007, all gained GCSE passes in English and/or mathematics, several at Grade C and, between them, they attained 40 Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA) Unit Award Certificates in preparation for the next stage of their education in college. Current pupils are building an impressive array of successes: for example, in AQA units, adult literacy and numeracy accreditation, first aid and swimming certificates, safe food handling and new computer literacy and information technology award passes. The school has very strong links with a broad range of local providers who offer vocational training which complements the pupils' school work exceptionally well.

The teacher-in-charge ensures staff have a very clear sense of purpose, with high expectations of the pupils individual pupils. All staff check pupils' progress carefully and ensure that they know what they have achieved and what else needs to be done. This is part of constant discussion with the pupils both academically and socially. All round achievement is celebrated through the merit system which pupils understand fully and appreciate. School improvement planning is clear and accurate and the teacher-in-charge provides detailed reports to the school's management committee each term. However, rigorous monitoring, challenge and support by the committee, based upon first hand knowledge, are not fully in place. This is why leadership and management overall is good rather than outstanding. Whilst pupils benefit from the sport and fitness facilities in the Bolton Lads and Girls Club, the management committee is involved in supporting the teacher-in-charge in trying to overcome issues linked to the cramped accommodation which impinges on practical subjects such as cookery and art. Also, there is a lack of appropriate space for confidential meetings and for pupils to take outdoor breaks and gain fresh air other than under the direct supervision of staff. This latter point was the main issue raised by pupils during the inspection: they could think of no other areas they would recommend for improvement. Despite the areas for improvement, a representative view of parents and other professionals who work with the school is that for pupils who at one time, 'had no life at all', 'The boost to pupils' self-confidence, self worth and self-esteem is truly amazing.' Parents and pupils alike comment that, 'This is a school that has helped us turn our lives around.'

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure more rigour in the monitoring, challenge and support which the management committee brings to its role.
- Improve the school's facilities for practical subjects, for holding confidential meetings and for pupils to be able to choose to take their breaks safely outdoors.

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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
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well 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 the learners' needs?	1
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?	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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**

Inspection of Park School, Bolton, BL1 4AG

Thank you for being so welcoming and positive about your life at Park School.

You talked to me very clearly about your appreciation of everything the staff do for you. For example, how you feel that every pupil matters, how staff explain to you how to improve your behaviour rather than telling you off, and how on most days everyone works together as a team. It is my view that you are very clear that your outstanding academic and personal achievement is the result of all of the support and expertise that the staff offer to you on a daily basis. They organise an exciting range of experiences for you both in the school and elsewhere, but what is really important is the spirit in which you take up these opportunities and succeed. You told me how lucky you feel to be helped by the team of staff, who are extremely well led by your teacher-in-charge. I agree with you.

You mentioned also how much you would appreciate the chance to choose to have break times outside in the fresh air but how this is difficult at the moment because of the limitations of the building in which you work. This is a good point. I think also that your school accommodation offers insufficient opportunity for confidential meetings for you, your parents and carers or others. The building also limits the extent that you can develop your skills in art and life skills in cookery. Your school has a management committee which helps your teacher-in-charge. I have asked that they do this in an even more effective way to help ensure the school gets even better.

Your help in this inspection was very much appreciated.