

Park View Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114288
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311551
Inspection date	24 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Ann Wallis

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	1457
6th form	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr William Dennison
Headteacher	Mr Ian Veitch
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2004
School address	Church Chare Chester le Street County Durham DH3 3QA
Telephone number	0191 3882248
Fax number	0191 3871720

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and the sixth form. It also investigated the following issues: standards and achievement in Years 7 to 11 and particularly in English, the quality of provision and how effective leaders and managers are in developing best practice in all subject areas. Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, senior staff, students and the chair of governors. School documents and parents' questionnaires were scrutinised and lessons were observed in the main school and in the sixth form. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments as given in its self-evaluation form were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

- Park View is an larger than average school which has been a specialist language college since 1998. It is housed on two sites which are two miles apart. The school serves a relatively affluent area of County Durham although there are pockets of deprivation within the catchment area. Most students are White British and few have English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average as is the proportion eligible for free school meals. The school had achieved the following national awards on consecutive occasions: Investors in People, International School Award, Sportsmark, Artsmark, ICT mark and IMPETUS award. Park View is a designated high performing specialist school and, as such, has Leading Edge status and a second specialism in Applied Learning.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Park View is a good and improving school with outstanding features. It is improving because leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher, governors and a talented senior leadership team have an unremitting focus on raising standards and improving students' achievement. A welcoming and friendly ethos pervades the school and morale is high. The curriculum is outstanding and is greatly enriched by the school's status as a specialist language college. Parents are very positive about the quality of education their sons and daughters receive. Their comments included, 'I could not wish my child to go to a better school' and 'the school is well led and teaching staff are of a high calibre.'

Standards are well above average and students' achievement is good. GCSE results in 2007 were above average and represented good progress from the students' broadly average starting points. Students' achievement was better in mathematics than in English. All targets, including those for a specialist language college were met. Students achieved best in Spanish, science, English literature, geography and mathematics, and less well in physical education, art and English language. Attainment on entry to the school is now rising and has been above average for the last four years. Results in Year 9 national tests are also rising and in 2007 were well above average. Current students in both key stages were seen making good progress in lessons, including English, and reaching well above average standards. All groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well. The school's detailed monitoring of students' progress indicates that they are on track to exceed challenging targets this year.

Students achieve well because teaching and learning are good. The school monitors teaching and learning rigorously, and regular sharing of good practice is further improving the quality of lessons across the school. Lessons have many strengths and the school's monitoring indicates that some are outstanding. Students were seen making good progress in lessons where the pace was brisk, teachers were very knowledgeable and resources and activities were varied and interesting. In some lessons, progress was slower because students were given insufficient opportunities to think for themselves and learn independently.

School self-evaluation is excellent. Monitoring is robust and an excellent combination of support and accountability is leading to further improvement in all areas of the school's work. Leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the school incredibly well. They continually reflect on their work and have very clear priorities for development. Consequently, the school has an excellent capacity to improve. All staff are made increasingly accountable for the quality of their practice and this is further reducing inconsistencies in teaching and learning across the school. Staff are valued and their talents nurtured. The skills of new teachers are developed well and those who are more experienced are given good opportunities to extend their experience by taking on new roles. The results of assessments are analysed rigorously and data are used exceptionally well by all staff to identify any student who is in danger of underachieving. These students are then given extra help to reach the challenging targets that are set for them. Governors know the school extremely well; they are very closely involved in its work and thoroughly committed to promoting further improvements. Resources are well managed and the school provides good value for money.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Most students have excellent attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed. Behaviour is good overall. Although much of the behaviour seen in lessons and around the school was excellent, exclusion records show that there is a

small, and now declining, number of students whose behaviour is unacceptable. Students enjoy school and attendance is improving and is now above average. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding. Students take on responsibility willingly and develop a real awareness of the needs of others through their many fund raising and community activities. Students have obvious respect for each other and for all school staff. Relationships are excellent. Students enjoy coming to school; they feel safe and say they are confident that there is always a member of staff on hand to listen to any concerns or worries they may have. They understand well the consequences of failing to adopt a healthy lifestyle and their adoption of safe practices is excellent. They have good teamwork skills and share information and ideas well. Hence they are well equipped for the world of work.

Care, guidance and support for students are good. Ensuring students are healthy, safe and achieving well is at the heart of the school's work. All the necessary checks to safeguard students are in place. In this caring and supportive atmosphere most students thrive. Very good use is made of a range of different agencies to provide additional support for all students, including the most vulnerable. Students and parents are appreciative of the careful way in which the transition from primary school is managed so settling in to a new school is made as smooth as possible. Academic monitoring is good and is used effectively to set challenging targets for students. However, it is not consistently used to plan lessons.

Students benefit greatly from the school's status as a specialist language college and the positive impact this has on the curriculum. Students are given the opportunity to study at least two and often three languages. Links with partner schools and organisations are numerous and very large numbers of students take part in overseas visits each year. Consequently, students have an excellent understanding of other cultures. Outstanding partnerships in both the main school and the sixth form include links with many schools (including one as far afield as China), colleges, academic organisations and support agencies. The curriculum is further strengthened by being reviewed regularly so that it is extremely well matched to students' needs. When a course, such as the provision for lower attaining students in Years 10 and 11, is not proving to be completely successful it is soon changed and improved. Innovative changes to the Year 7 curriculum allow learners to explore the links between subjects and develop the skills needed for independent research and enquiry. Staff make very good use of information and communication technology to develop interesting resources which enrich the curriculum and increase students' enjoyment of learning.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is improving and is good. Standards are now above average and achievement is good. The sixth form provides good value for money. In 2007, AS and A level examination results were average. This represented satisfactory achievement for this group of students from their broadly average starting points. Students achieved least well in art, general studies and English language. Students on vocational courses achieved well. Current students were seen to be making good progress in lessons and are on track to reach challenging targets. Teaching and learning are good although students do not always have sufficient opportunities to learn independently. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Recently introduced systems to monitor students' attendance rigorously, track their progress and intervene to guide and support their learning when needed are having a very positive impact on progress, and standards are rising. Retention rates are good. Students speak positively about their sixth-form experience. They particularly value the high quality guidance

they are given in choosing both sixth form and higher education courses. They have excellent relationships with staff and are appreciative of the good personal care and academic support they receive. Students' personal development is good. They are confident and articulate young people who are keen to take responsibility and who make their views heard. They leave Park View well equipped for their future lives.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities for students in all year groups to think for themselves and learn independently.
- Maintain the momentum of rising standards and improving achievement in the sixth form.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2

Achievement and standards

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

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	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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?	1	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	2
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	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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

28 April 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Park View Community School, Durham, DH3 3QA

We recently visited your school to find out how well you are achieving and how well your school is supporting you. We really appreciated the friendly welcome you gave us and are very grateful to those of you who took time to speak with us. We were very impressed with your positive attitudes and the honest and balanced way in which you expressed your opinions.

This is what we have said about your school in the inspection report:

- Yours is a good and improving school with some outstanding features.
- The sixth form is good.
- You reach above average standards and achieve well.
- The leadership and management of your school are outstanding.
- The curriculum you study is outstanding.
- Teaching and learning, your personal development and the care, guidance and support you receive are all good.

This is what we have asked your school to do now:

- Increase the opportunities for students in all year groups to think for themselves and learn independently.
- Maintain the momentum of rising standards and improving achievement in the sixth form.

You can continue to help your school improve further by working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Yours sincerely

Ann Wallis

Lead inspector