

Park Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116473
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	326406
Inspection date	10 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Adrian Lyons HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	887
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr F Deeks
Headteacher	Mr C Anders
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2006
School address	Middle Park Way Leigh Park Havant PO9 4BU
Telephone number	02392 489800
Fax number	02392 481012

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. He evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the extent to which the curriculum meets the needs and interests of all groups of students
- how well leaders and managers at all levels ensure consistency in provision
- the extent to which the school's most-able students achieve to the best of their ability.

He gathered evidence from discussions with senior and middle leaders, observation of students engaged in activities around the school, and discussion with groups of students. 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 self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Park Community School is a little smaller than average size high school. Just over a half of the school's population have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the proportion of students entitled to free school meals is above average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is very small. There are more girls than boys on roll.

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 aims to promote and develop 'attainment, resilience and autonomy' providing 'success for all in our learning community'. In this aim it is exceptionally successful. As a Specialist Arts School, it brings the arts into the daily lives of each student, for example through use of the 'Butterfly Broadcast', 'Amphitheatre', regular productions, the wide range of Wednesday activities, and outreach work. The second specialism of science has developed outreach work, but its impact around the school is less well developed. The high academic achievement of students is part of a much wider story of first-class education. The school excels in helping students to develop as individuals.

Students enter Year 7 with academic standards that are well below average. By the time they leave Year 11, GCSE results show that standards are above average. In 2008, 85% gained five passes at the highest grades, a high proportion. However, only 32% of students gained five highest-grade passes that included both English and mathematics. This result is well below the national average and was unusually low for the school. This year the school has developed systems to improve the proportion of students attaining both English and mathematics at this level.

The progress made by students between Years 7 and 11 is exceptionally high and is consistently in the top 1% of schools. This is true of their overall progress across a range of subjects and also for both English and for mathematics. No groups of students under-perform against similar groups nationally but, in the past, the most outstanding progress has been found more often among lower-attaining students. The school has correctly identified improving the progress of the most able as a current priority. For many years the curriculum was adapted to give the best possible chance of success for the bulk of students. It has now been improved to recognise the needs and interests of the full ability range. It is innovative in many ways.

One of the ways in which the curriculum is innovative is in the provision for personal development, where the outcomes are outstanding. The school's mentoring system is well integrated with assemblies to provide an unusual but effective approach to religious and citizenship themes. Enterprise education and personal financial education have been developed rather later than in many schools, but this area is advancing rapidly and well. A very high proportion of students participate in clubs and out-of-lesson activities such as sports, music and drama. Students' aspirations are raised by trips to exciting destinations such as San Francisco or Venice, as well as more local trips and visits, which are very valuable.

Students' outstanding achievement is a result of teaching that is consistently and overwhelmingly at least good. This works together with the excellent pastoral care and the high expectations that are enshrined in the school's clear explanations. Learning is enhanced by very good relationships and students' very good motivation. In the best lessons, teachers inspire students by their enthusiasm, and make full use of time through skilful employment of methods that engage all the students actively. Students' progress is enhanced by high-quality feedback and opportunities to assess their own and others' work. This all leads to the overall quality of teaching and learning being outstanding.

Central to the success of the school are the excellent leadership and management at all levels. During the current academic year, a new headteacher has built on the strong track record of improvement and success established by his predecessor. Leaders and managers have a common vision and high aspirations for their students. Staff at all levels have opportunities to contribute

to school improvement through involvement in a wide range of working groups. Unfortunately, the quality of the accommodation does not do justice to the quality of the work of staff and students. Managers have made the best possible use of the resources they have, and there are some excellent examples of using rooms to enhance provision, such as through the recording and broadcasting suite. Boys' toilets have been greatly improved, but students and parents are correct in reporting the girls' toilets to be unacceptable.

A relatively small proportion of parents returned questionnaires for the inspection. Respondents were overwhelmingly positive about the school and all that it offers, although a few commented negatively about communication with parents. These concerns were investigated. While not disputing individual concerns, the inspector concluded that the school not only has good systems to deal with the concerns of parents but that staff are readily available to meet parents. Typical of the positive comments made by parents was one that summed up the school's aim, 'I have found since my daughter joined Park Community School, she has really grown in confidence and all abilities within her school learning. She is always organised and willing to help others.'

Community links are outstanding, as is the school's contribution to community cohesion. The school has identified the needs of the local community and affords extensive opportunities to provide for the complex needs of that community and involve its members in supporting the school. This really is a 'community school' in action as well as name. At the national Children and Young People's Services Awards, the school won the Extended School Award for 2008. The judge's comment was, 'The school's services run through the community like a golden strand, not simply bolting on services.'

Students' great enjoyment of school is evidenced by their good attendance and punctuality. Behaviour around the school is excellent. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is given a high priority and is very successful. The way in which relative weaknesses in provision are identified and tackled provides strong evidence of the school's outstanding capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on the outstanding achievement in English and mathematics to increase students' life chances and opportunities by increasing the proportion gaining the highest grades in both these subjects.

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

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
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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 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 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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

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

22 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Park Community School, Havant, PO9 4BU

I am writing to let you know the judgements I have made about your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to me about your work, your life in school, and all that you do. It was a joy and privilege to visit your school. Yours is an outstanding school and here are the reasons.

You achieve extremely well. Although in general the results with which you begin Year 7 are well below average, the proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes at A* to C is well above average. The school gives you an excellent chance to do well. In fact, for several years the average progress of students has been in the top 1% in the country, and you came top of the national league. You told me about how well you are supported by teachers, and while in every school some lessons are better than others, the overall quality of teaching and learning in your school is outstanding. You told me about the many opportunities you have outside of normal lessons such as trips and visits, although some of you felt that the availability of trips was not always fair.

I observed and heard about excellent behaviour around the school. As far as I could tell, your parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. However, only a small proportion of your parents returned the questionnaires, so this judgement is based on that small response. You and your parents complained about the state of the toilets. There have been improvements for the boys but you are right that conditions for girls are unacceptable. I know that there are building plans to put this right.

Although I have judged your school to be outstanding, that does not mean that it is perfect. The headteacher and senior leaders are determined to make things even better. We agreed on the need to increase the proportion of students gaining good passes at GCSE in English and mathematics together, to further increase your opportunities when you leave school.

Yours faithfully

Adrian Lyons

Her Majesty's Inspector