

Park Lane High

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107561
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	336911
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Katrina Gueli 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	531
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kashanda Spencer-Bake
Headteacher	Mr Kevin McCallion
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons, and held meetings with school leaders, governors, groups of students, a representative of the local authority and the school's National Challenge adviser. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised the school's assessment and monitoring information, minutes of governing body meetings and analysed 37 questionnaires returned by parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following questions.

- How well do students achieve and develop their workplace skills?
- How effectively are the quality of teaching and the use of assessment accelerating students' progress?
- How effective are the school's safeguarding procedures?
- How well are leaders and managers at all levels tackling identified weaknesses and bringing about the necessary improvement?

Information about the school

Park Lane High is a small secondary school, in an area typified by high levels of deprivation. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. A large number of students join or leave the school at a time other than expected. Over 30% of students on roll did not join the school at the start of Year 7. Many inwardly mobile students have complex social and emotional needs and/or a history of poor attendance. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and the percentage of these students with a statement of special educational needs is high. The number of students of minority ethnic heritage is below average.

Following the secondment of the substantive headteacher to the local authority at the start of September 2009, the school is now under the joint leadership of an acting headteacher and an executive headteacher, who also lead another nearby secondary school. Consultation is currently underway for the school to become a National Challenge Trust school in January 2010.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' achievement and attendance.

While the quality of teaching and students' progress are satisfactory overall, the proportion of good or better teaching is not sufficiently high to overcome students' very low attainment on entry to the school. Consequently, despite some improvements since the last inspection, attainment remains stubbornly, significantly below average for most benchmarks including the government's floor target for students gaining 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics. Students' achievement is inadequate. Attendance is low and too many students have high rates of absence. The care, guidance and support for students are good. For the most vulnerable students this element of the school's work is excellent, underpinned by the wide-ranging productive partnerships that the school has with external agencies. The good pastoral support also contributes well to students feeling safe in school and in ensuring that the vast majority progress into education, employment or training when they leave at the end of Year 11. Similarly, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because they receive good quality support to overcome any identified barriers to their learning.

The acting headteacher and executive headteacher have swiftly and accurately identified the key strengths and weaknesses within the school and have vigorously set about securing the necessary development. Early successes include a substantial improvement to students' behaviour and securing the shared commitment of staff and governors to tackle the significant challenges that the school faces. Teachers now understand the need for students to make progress at a faster rate and the majority of senior and middle leaders are taking more responsibility for contributing to improving students' outcomes. The sharper focus by all leaders on securing the necessary improvement underpinned by robust monitoring, combined with strong partnerships with a neighbouring school and the local authority, provide the school with satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate students' progress by:
 - increasing the proportion of good or better teaching so that learning is good or

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better in the vast majority of lessons

- using assessment information more sharply to plan lessons that better meet students' differing learning needs
- improving the quality of marking and written feedback so students know what they need to do to improve
- ensuring that all subjects contribute to the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills.

- Improve attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

In good lessons, students respond well and have positive attitudes to their learning. They work at a good pace to acquire knowledge and learn new skills, both individually and in groups. Students particularly enjoy lessons with a variety of interesting tasks and opportunities for 'hands on' experiences. However, many lack the confidence to complete written activities well, due in part to their weak literacy skills. A small minority of parents and students raised concerns about behaviour in their responses to the questionnaires. The inspection team found that the behaviour of the majority of students in lessons and around school is good. However, a small minority of students are still failing to respond appropriately to the school's high expectations of behaviour. Consequently, although declining, there is still a considerable number of fixed-term exclusions and behaviour is, therefore, judged to be satisfactory overall. Inspectors were impressed with students' mature approach to the remembrance activities in assembly and in respecting a two minute silence, which clearly demonstrated students' many positive personal qualities. Students confirm that themed days are effective in helping them to understand factors that influence their health and well-being. Nevertheless, a minority do not choose to adopt practices that they know will be beneficial to their health.

Many students contribute to the school and wider community in a number of ways including involvement in the school council, acting as reading buddies in Year 10 and fundraising for charity. However, a small minority of students, particularly at Key Stage 4, report that they would welcome a broader range of opportunities to make a positive contribution. Year 11 leavers' participation in education, training or employment is above the local authority's average following significant improvement over that last three years. Although this is a great success, the basic skills of many students are still underdeveloped and too many continue to be persistently absent.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The teaching observed ranged from good to inadequate, with judgments of the inspection team closely aligning with those from the school's monitoring of the quality of teaching. When teaching is good teachers use a variety of tasks, real life contexts and cross-curricular links to successfully engage students in their learning. Outcomes are linked to different levels of performance and students are given clear oral feedback on how to improve their work. However, these good lessons are in the minority. Often lessons lack challenge and the pace is slow, assessment is not well used to plan learning to meet students' needs and the inappropriate behaviour that ensues is not well managed. Opportunities for students' literacy and numeracy skills to be developed are frequently missed. Similarly, new learning technologies are not consistently well used to enhance teaching or provide opportunities for students to develop their own skills. While there are good examples of teachers' marking in subjects such as English, generally marking and written feedback are of a poor quality in many cases.

The curriculum has a number of strengths including the range and type of qualifications on offer at Key Stage 4 and the successful STAR (Support, Target, Achievement, Reward) provision to meet the needs of the most vulnerable students in both key stages. A recent detailed review of the curriculum has identified key areas for development and well-thought-through changes are planned to address these weaknesses in January 2010. The use of all subjects of the curriculum to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills remains underdeveloped. There has been an increase in extra-curricular provision since the last inspection and participation rates have improved. However, the school rightly recognises that there is much more to be

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done in this regard to maximise the impact of the curriculum on students' outcomes. Leadership of students' pastoral support is strong and all students receive good quality care. The many students who join the school during each year are well inducted and settle in quickly. There are many striking examples where individuals with complex needs have been helped to overcome significant barriers to their learning. Systems to monitor behaviour and recent changes to tutor group structures and additional staffing are already having a positive impact on students' attitudes. This is reflected in the reduction in teachers' use of 'on-call' and the number of fixed-term exclusions. However, the school has been less successful in improving attendance despite the wide-ranging involvement of other agencies and partners. Advice and guidance to help students make informed choices about their future is of a consistently good quality.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher and the executive headteacher have clearly communicated their vision for the school to all staff and expectations of what students can achieve have been raised. They have revised and improved systems to track students' progress, so those at risk of underachievement can be identified more quickly and helped to get back on track. The performance of different groups of students is carefully analysed with targeted support and intervention to ensure that students' identified barriers to learning are overcome. Students' progress data are also beginning to be used more effectively to hold leaders and teachers to account. Senior leaders' clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching has ensured that training for staff has been well matched to their development needs. As a result, there is evidence of greater consistency in teachers' planning and an increased focus on the importance of assessment as a tool to raise attainment. However, there has been limited time for much of this good development work to be embedded or for the impact to be seen in improved achievement.

Roles and responsibilities of all senior and middle leaders have been clarified and all now understand the expectations of their posts. The school has rightly identified that there is variation in quality across this wider leadership team and plans are already in place for a rigorous programme of professional development to improve skills in monitoring, evaluating and leading improvement. Governors are very supportive of the school and have recently gained a more realistic view of its strengths and weaknesses. While they

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have fulfilled many of their statutory duties, governors have not ensured that the school is fulfilling its duty to promote community cohesion or been sufficiently robust in holding leaders to account for the school's performance. Partnerships with parents are effective with strong home-school pastoral links supporting students' with complex needs well. The school meets all statutory requirements for safeguarding with good attention to supporting the most vulnerable students through effective multi-agency working.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Views of parents and carers

A very small minority of parents returned the questionnaire. The vast majority were very happy with their child's experience at the school, with several individual parents making contact with the inspection team to praise the work of the school in supporting their children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Park Lane High to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 531 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	32	16	43	7	19	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	8	22	23	62	3	8	1	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	24	17	46	9	24	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	24	20	54	6	16	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	6	16	22	59	4	11	2	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	16	16	43	12	32	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	11	23	62	6	16	1	3
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	10	27	18	49	3	8	3	8
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	16	23	62	6	16	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	24	11	30	10	27	3	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	16	19	51	8	22	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	5	14	18	49	8	22	2	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	10	27	16	43	6	16	2	5

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Park Lane High, Halifax, HX3 9LG

You may remember that a team of inspectors recently visited your school. We would like to thank you for taking the time to talk to us in meetings and around school, showing us your work and completing the questionnaire.

We found that although there are a number of effective aspects to the school's work significant improvement is required with regard to your achievement and attendance. We have therefore given the school a notice to improve. There a number of things that we have asked to school to do to make sure that you achieve well. These include:

- increasing the amount of good or better teaching so your learning is good or better in the vast majority of lessons
- using assessment information better so that all lessons meet your different learning needs well
- improving the quality of teachers' marking and written feedback to you so you know what you need to do to improve your work
- making sure teachers in all subjects are helping you to develop your literacy and numeracy skills.

We have also asked the school to help many of you improve your attendance and they need your help to do this. You will never be able to achieve as well as you can unless you come to school regularly. The vast majority of you behave well, although a small minority of you are still choosing not to meet the school's high expectations for your behaviour. You told us that one of the strengths of your school is the care and support that is provided by staff to ensure you feel safe and your well-being needs are effectively met. Inspectors agree with your views. This good aspect of the school's work helps you to develop many positive personal qualities and ensures the nearly all of you successfully progress into education, employment or training when you leave Year 11.

I hope you will all play your part in helping the school to improve.

Yours sincerely,

Katrina Gueli

Her Majesty's Inspector

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