

# The Park Community School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113514
<b>Local Authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	338191
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anne Looney HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1450
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr M Canham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr D Atton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Park Lane Barnstaple EX32 9AX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01271 373131
<b>Fax number</b>	01271 373167
<b>Email address</b>	admin@parkcommunity.devon.sch.uk

---

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2009

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 37 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, policy documents and students' work. They also scrutinised 253 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, and questionnaires completed by staff and a sample of students.

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

- Exactly how good is the achievement of students throughout the school?
- Does the provision meet the needs of all students, including the average attainers and excluded students, to ensure outcomes are equally strong for all students?
- What exactly are the features of teaching and assessment which are promoting enjoyment and helping students learn and make the best progress they can, given their starting points?
- How effective are all middle managers in supporting the school's drive for improvement?

## Information about the school

The Park Community School is a very large school that has had specialist technology school status since 2002, and launched a second specialism in applied learning in 2007. The proportions of students who are from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language are below national averages. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Included in this group are students who require additional help with literacy and communication, and those who present with behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. A small number of students are in public care.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

The Park Community School is a good school. The outstanding care, guidance and support the school provides for its students are significant factors in the development of the students as fully-rounded individuals by the time they leave. Support for all students is exemplary but particularly noteworthy is the time and care devoted to students who are potentially vulnerable or who might otherwise be excluded from full-time education. Students are proud of their school and welcoming to visitors. Their involvement in the school and contribution to the wider community are first-rate. They have a very strong sense of right and wrong and show an openness and maturity towards people of other faiths and cultures. The attendance rate has improved significantly since the previous inspection and that, along with the good behaviour, is a clear sign that students enjoy their learning.

Students' attainment at the end of Year 11 is average. Examinations results have improved in recent years and the students make good progress over their time at the school. They arrive with below average literacy skills, and the well-focused literacy support that the school provides makes a strong contribution to that good progress.

The curriculum serves the needs of the students well. The flexibility in Years 10 and 11 is leading to programmes for learning becoming increasingly personalised. The relationships in the classroom are good and they underpin the quality of teaching, which is good overall. Teaching promotes learning well and students show interest and engagement. In some lessons there is a limited range of teaching styles, and this both diminishes the enthusiasm which students show and slows the pace at which they progress. Verbal feedback is good and students are aware of their targets but there is a lack of consistency in the quality of written guidance given to students on how to improve their work.

The school exploits its partnerships exceptionally well, particularly through its specialist status role, its links with external agencies and its work with parents. The school's focus on improvement through rigorous monitoring and targeted support linked closely to students' achievement ensures it has a good capacity to improve. Senior leaders have a good and accurate picture of the strengths and areas for development for the school and plan well for improvement. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly through subject reviews. The outcomes of these reviews have led to good targeted support for teachers and departments and have led to improved practice.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching by developing and sharing good practice,

**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

ensuring that teachers extend their range of teaching styles so that students are inspired and fully engaged by all lesson activities.

- Ensure that all written feedback to students makes it clear exactly how they might improve their work.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' achievement is good. They enjoy their learning, and both boys and girls participate well in class. Students told inspectors that they learn particularly well in lessons where they are actively involved and inspectors saw good examples of this in English, music and science. Students also respond positively to the way information and communication technology (ICT) helps them learn and say they would like to use it more. There has been an enthusiastic response to the computer-based virtual learning environment, particularly in the way it has supported work out of school.

Attainment at the end of Year 11 has remained broadly average over the last three years although the results in the most recent GCSE examinations indicate a sharp improvement in the number of students attaining five A\* to C grades, including mathematics and English, particularly over 2008 figures. The school's own tracking data indicate that students in the current Year 11 are making good progress towards their realistic and challenging targets.

At the time of the last inspection average attaining students were judged to be underachieving. Considerable targeted support has resulted in there now being no significant difference in achievement between different groups of students. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very carefully tracked to ensure they make progress that is at least good.

Students say that they feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of risks, including those relating to the use of new technologies. Incidents of bullying are uncommon and students feel confident that the school will deal effectively with any that do arise. They say they are well listened to and they, in turn, value the chance to act as listeners to others as peer mentors and as 'agony aunts' to pupils in the feeder primary schools. They exploit sporting opportunities well to keep fit and are keenly aware of the dangers associated with smoking and drug abuse. Students say they feel well prepared for future life and the very low percentage of students who do not go into further education, training or employment when they leave the school is testimony to this.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

---

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

**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

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

**How effective is the provision?**

Relationships in the classroom are good and in the vast majority of lessons teachers manage behaviour well and set clear guidelines for what is acceptable. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to extend students' knowledge by probing questioning. The majority of teachers use a range of resources and activities to motivate students and there is some very effective and appropriate use of ICT by teachers to enliven lessons and generate pace. Teachers make good use of other adults in the classroom to support learning, and not just to manage behaviour. Teachers also provide good support to students beyond the classroom when there is a need to consolidate learning and address underachievement. Teaching is less effective when there is a limited range of activities and/or resources and too much teacher talk. Good verbal feedback is given to students in lessons but the manner in which work is marked is inconsistent in its focus on how students might improve. Assessment practice in English is consistently good.

The specialist school status ensures enhanced opportunities in technology and has a considerable impact on achievement, particularly in science where targets have been regularly exceeded. The flexibility of the option choices in Years 10 and 11 allows for students of all abilities to specialise, while retaining breadth and balance in their options. Students value the fact that their choices are not constrained and more unusual options such as astronomy are becoming increasingly popular. The proportion of students studying a modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11 is good. The school is to take the lead in the development of a science diploma. A broad range of extra-curricular activities enrich the curriculum and participation rates are high.

**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

The house system is much liked by the students, who value the support it provides throughout their school life. Students have excellent access to support and guidance from a wide range of external agencies as well as from the school's own learning mentors. Particularly good support is given to students exhibiting poor behaviour, and excluded students are very well integrated back into school. The school's attendance tracking systems are exemplary and have led to a significant increase in attendance. As part of the drive to involve parents more in the life of the school, the school also runs effective parenting classes.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher and his senior leadership team are committed to fostering a learning environment where students are both supported and challenged to succeed. In this they are well supported by the staff, who say that their opinions are respected and their contributions valued. Staff feel that they are well led.

Senior leaders involve heads of subject well in the setting of targets and support them well in the process. These middle leaders have a good understanding of the basis of these targets and how they should be used to track achievement, and they regularly monitor students' progress. The school has a rolling programme of subject reviews during which teaching is monitored. Heads of subject have, as a result, a clear idea of strengths and areas for development in their subjects and make sure that training and support are provided appropriately. However, the level of their involvement in observations and the extent to which they ensure consistency when teachers evaluate each other's performance vary between departments.

The school has robust systems to ensure the safety of the students. Policies are clear and well structured, and understood by all. Systems are regularly monitored and evaluated, and updated when necessary. Records are well maintained. The school is inclusive in its approach. It ensures that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the small, but increasing, proportion of students who speak English as an additional language have equality of access to the curriculum. Their progress is well monitored.

The governors also have a good awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development, and make informed challenges when appropriate. The school promotes community cohesion well and actions are planned to have a particularly strong impact

**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

on the local community.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire, the overwhelming majority showed high levels of satisfaction with the school. A few parents and carers expressed the concern that the school did not help them to support their children's learning. The inspection team noted their concern but judged links with parents to be good.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Park Community School 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 253 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,450 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	117	46	124	49	10	4	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	91	36	151	60	6	2	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	90	36	141	56	17	7	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	94	37	141	56	9	4	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	68	27	171	68	3	1	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	60	24	149	59	28	11	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	67	27	162	64	17	7	0	0
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)	88	35	139	55	9	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	72	29	156	62	13	5	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	74	29	150	59	17	7	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	60	24	151	60	13	5	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	89	35	145	57	4	2	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	114	45	129	51	4	2	2	1

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of The Park Community School, Barnstaple, EX32 9AX

We very much enjoyed talking to you when we visited your school on 7 and 8 October. We found you to be welcoming and polite and thought that your behaviour was good. We were pleased to see how much your attendance at school has improved since the school was last inspected.

We think that The Park is a good school. The senior leaders work well with all the other staff in the school to monitor your work to make sure that you make good progress. Your school cares for and supports you exceptionally well and this helps you develop really well as young people who contribute fully to the community and who possess a very strong sense of right and wrong.

Links with other schools and organisations are very good, particularly in the school's work as a specialist school. You told us that you thought that the curricular choice in Years 10 and 11 was good. We agree with you. You show an interest in class and we were pleased to see how much you joined in with class discussions. We thought that some lessons were not as varied as they might be and could see that, although you still behaved well, you were not as motivated.

We have asked the school to:

- further improve the quality of teaching by getting teachers to work more closely together and share what they do well
  - make sure that all marking makes it really clear what you need to do to improve.
- You can help by continuing to respond well to your teachers and to work as hard as you can.

Yours faithfully

Anne Looney

Her Majesty's Inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**