

18 June 2010

Mr Kevin McCallion  
Headteacher  
Park Lane Learning Trust  
Exley  
Halifax  
West Yorkshire  
HX3 9LG

Dear Mr McCallion

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 17 June 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the students that I met at lunchtime.

As a result of the inspection on 10 and 11 November 2009, the school was asked to:

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

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising students' achievement.

Since the last inspection Park Lane has become a National Challenge Trust School with the new board of governors meeting for the first time this week. Brooksbank School, one of the trust partners, has provided Park Lane with an executive and acting headteacher throughout 2009/10 but a new headteacher has been appointed



for September. There have been a number of long term staff absences this year leaving the school reliant on supply teachers.

Recent test and external examination results indicate improved performance in Year 11. Already 65% of Year 11 students have secured five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C: an increase of 5 percentage points on last year. Students' progress is systematically monitored and leaders and teachers are much more confident in the accuracy of assessments. More comprehensive and timely interventions are having a positive impact on achievement. Internal tracking data suggest that over 30% of students are likely to obtain five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics, potentially lifting the school over the National Challenge threshold for the first time. Data tracking students' progress in Key Stage 3 also shows an improving trend.

The monitoring of teaching and learning is robust. Records and inspection evidence show the proportion of good teaching is increasing and the amount of inadequate teaching reducing. This has been achieved through intensive staff development focusing on the essential skills of teaching complemented by individual support. Teachers have a better understanding of what constitutes good and satisfactory teaching and are building their skills on firm foundations. Students spoke of more variety in lessons, teachers listening more carefully and clearer explanations. Learning activities are encouraging students to work more independently but many are still reliant on direction from teachers.

Assessment data is used increasingly to plan lessons and there are pockets of good practice but further development is needed as not all lessons include tasks tailored to individuals' needs. The quality of marking is improving but is still too variable. Students say the quality of feedback is much better especially in science, art and English.

The school has a well thought out plan for developing literacy and numeracy skills within all subjects, beginning with literacy. Staff development has led to a sharper focus on the use of key words in lessons and teachers developing speaking skills by encouraging students to give fuller explanations. Reading interventions are resulting in improvements in reading scores and students say that spelling and punctuation errors are corrected by teachers in subjects other than English.

The attendance rate has risen by 3% this year and the proportion of persistent absentees has fallen by over 7%. Successful strategies to improve attendance include a rewards system for students and a more efficient absence monitoring system that has released additional time that staff use to support absentees and parents. Heads of year and tutors are accountable for the attendance of their students and electronic reports highlight any issues quickly.



In addition to addressing issues from the last inspection, senior leaders have worked hard to gain trust status in order to secure the long term future of the school and attract extra funding to support improvements. Some longstanding staffing issues have also been tackled.

The school has received good support from the local authority, the National Challenge Adviser and the National Strategies Regional Adviser for English. It has also received invaluable support from trust partners.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jan Bennett  
Her Majesty's Inspector

