

Park High School

Thistlecroft Gardens, Stanmore, HA7 1PL

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The sixth form is outstanding because students make exceptional progress. In many subjects the progress they make by the end of Year 13 is in the top 10% nationally.
- In recent years, despite fluctuations in some subjects, GCSE results have shown an upward trend. Students' achievement in mathematics is exceptional.
- A key feature of many lessons is how well students discuss work together, explain their understanding to each other or the class and thus deepen their thinking and learning.
- Outstanding teaching is a feature of all year groups and practically all subjects. Teachers are skilful at building students' confidence that they can tackle difficult work.
- Teachers' marking is often of a high quality with regular, analytical comments and clear suggestions for improvement.
- Students behave extremely well moving around the cramped site. They concentrate and work hard in lessons. They feel safe and secure, are polite and welcoming and proud to belong to the school community.
- In the last four years, the headteacher has successfully combined the school's many existing strengths with a successful, sharp focus on raising standards.
- Senior leaders and managers have established an efficient and effective data system to monitor students' performance and personal needs. It is easy for teachers to input assessment results and to access the information they need to plan lessons.
- Whatever students' individual academic or pastoral needs, staff put helpful and supportive care in place so that all of them can enjoy school life and make progress. Heads of year are as responsible for academic progress as they are for students' welfare.
- Led by an experienced and astute Chair, the governing body blends its enthusiastic support with a steely determination to keep improving the school. Governors expect and receive succinct and useful information to inform their deliberations.
- Senior leaders support teachers' professional development extremely well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 57 part lessons, two of which were jointly observed with a senior leader. Inspectors observed an assembly and visited tutor sessions and personal, social and health education lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the senior leadership team, leaders in charge of subjects and other aspects of the school’s work, other staff with positions of responsibility and the Chair of the Governing Body along with two other governors.
- Inspectors discussed lessons they had seen with teaching staff and examined a range of documents including the school’s own self-evaluation, improvement plans and data about progress, standards, exclusions, attendance and behaviour. They evaluated the quality of information prepared for the governors.
- Inspectors looked at a range of students’ work in lessons.
- GCSE and AS examinations had started the day before the inspection, so Year 11 students were only in school for a few revision lessons or if they were involved with technical rehearsals for GCSE dance and/or drama; there were no Year 12 lessons.
- Inspectors took account of the very small number of responses to Ofsted’s on-line Parent View questionnaire and one completed by several members of staff.

Inspection team

Clare Gillies, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Elson	Additional Inspector
Grace Marriott	Additional Inspector
Martin Marsh	Additional Inspector
Jim McVeigh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Park High School converted to an academy school on 1 August 2011. When its predecessor school, with the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- In the main school and the sixth form, about two-thirds of the students are of Asian, predominantly Indian, heritage. Less than one in ten students is of White British or other White heritage. The remaining students represent several minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is high.
- A slightly below average proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium which provides additional funding for specific groups including looked after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average. The most common needs relate to behaviour, emotional and social difficulties and specific learning difficulties.
- Just under 40 students are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in English or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The school uses part-time, alternative, off-site education provision for a few students at the Harrow Skills Centre.
- In addition to several prestigious awards, the school became a Youth Sports Trust Gold partner in 2013.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, particularly the percentage of GCSE A* and A grades even further by:
 - keeping a sharper eye on the individuals or small groups of students who have been identified as making less than the consistently outstanding progress achieved by most
 - bringing all marking up to the standard of the best and checking that students take note of teachers' comments and advice
 - making sure that all teachers give students opportunities to write at length in well-structured paragraphs and insisting on good presentation and handwriting.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The school challenges students to make more than nationally expected progress between Years 7 and 11. The proportion of students making or exceeding expected progress in mathematics is very high. Some more-able students are entered early for GCSE mathematics at the end of Year 10 and attain A* and A grades. These students are not held back in their studies but proceed on to higher level mathematical qualifications.
- Over 60 students took A-level mathematics in 2012. Progress in this subject, along with economics, English literature, psychology and others, was significantly high.
- Students taking the three separate sciences also make outstanding progress and the school is working hard to make sure that those taking double award science do as well. The GCSE results of several other subjects, particularly dance, drama and religious education, exceed national averages, but in a few others the percentage of A* and A grades does not. The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- The gap between the attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals and the rest is less than half a GCSE grade in both English and mathematics, which is much narrower than that seen nationally and closing. In 2012, fewer White British students achieved five A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics than other ethnic groups. Current data indicate that their achievement has improved in all year groups. In the sixth form, White British students make outstanding progress, exceeding that made by other groups.
- A few disabled students and those who have special educational needs, often for complex reasons, do not make outstanding progress. They, and students eligible for pupil premium or Year 7 catch-up funding, receive extra support so that practically all of them are making at least good progress. The small number of students attending part-time, off-site, alternative provision makes excellent progress on work-related courses.
- Students' numeracy skills are excellent and many read widely and fluently. Encouraged to discuss their work and present their findings to the class, students speak with assurance, but a relative weakness is that not all of them write with the same confidence.
- Writing improves in the sixth form where teachers focus on the style and skills required to answer examination questions. In 2012, over half of the A-level grades awarded were grade B or higher. Students achieve places at prestigious universities and all proceed to higher education or work.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers have outstanding subject knowledge and use imaginative and stimulating resources. They are very skilful at showing students how to work independently and think for themselves and at giving them time to work together and share their understanding. Students' learning is deep when, for example, they have to articulate how they carry out algebraic calculations or reach a balanced evaluation of historical materials. Teachers probe understanding during lessons and respond to students' answers by fine tuning their questions.
- Students taking examinations say they enjoy most of their revision lessons. The successful learning seen in many lessons is underpinned, within clear boundaries for behaviour, by respectful relationships and humour, essential when inviting Year 13 sociology students to consider a 'wall of dread' and a 'wall of hope' about which topics might come up in their examination. Teachers prepare students exceptionally well for their examinations.
- Because most teachers mark constructively and often give oral feedback as well, students know how well they are doing and how to improve their work, although they do not always respond to written comments in their work. Many observe that they have 'lots of homework', but they appreciate that it develops the work covered in lessons.
- The school promotes reading and writing with determination. It is having most success with

reading by insisting that students read in some tutor times, focusing on subject-specific vocabulary in lessons and by giving weak readers intensive support. Teachers do not yet focus enough in helping students to write at length in well-structured paragraphs, and in insisting on good presentation and handwriting.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Almost all students involve themselves fully in everything the school has to offer. They attend well and are keen to learn. Year 12 students lead the school council most effectively and enthusiastically help younger students with reading or subjects they find difficult. Students are confident their views on school life and teaching are valued.
- Behaviour is impeccable in the sixth form and often exemplary in other year groups.
- Students are sure that there is no discrimination by gender and that participation in sporting and performing arts activities is not dependent on 'being the best'.
- The assembly seen during the inspection marked International Anti-Homophobia Day, but the profile of this, and other sensitive issues, is maintained throughout the year. Students are adamant that diversity and different lifestyles are respected.
- Students are equally confident that, as one said, 'There is probably less bullying than you might expect.' The extremely rare instances of racism and bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively. A high profile is given to raising awareness of cyber bullying and the potential hazards of on-line sites and mobiles.
- In addition to taking certificates assessing 'preparation for working lives', students are encouraged to gain leadership experience and qualifications, particularly in sports. Many participate enthusiastically. Amongst numerous opportunities, they can follow Duke of Edinburgh courses, advise senior leaders on information technology developments or lead fundraising to support charities in the United Kingdom and overseas.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The opening sentence on the school's website, 'High achievement is our aim – Respect and good manners', is reflected in the headteacher's leadership. He has maintained the outstanding elements noted in the past and focused on getting all subjects to achieve equally well. He is ably supported by a large senior leadership team and well-organised and efficient non-teaching staff.
- Teachers' morale is high – their work is valued and their professional development kept in sharp focus. Many study for higher qualifications. At a weekly staff briefing, teachers discuss teaching ideas and research. They are constantly challenged to reflect on their practice. Senior leaders accurately evaluate the quality of teaching and use this information to support individuals or to suggest those who could work together on some aspect of their lessons. If necessary, external subject reviews are organised and actions taken.
- All staff have performance management targets for students' progress in all three key stages. Teachers do not automatically progress to the upper pay spine if their performance does not merit it. Targets evolve from high quality self-evaluation, meticulous analysis of how well students are doing and development plans.
- Leadership of the support for potentially vulnerable students or those with special educational needs is outstanding. Students entering the school after Year 7 could not be helped better to settle in quickly. A parent wrote to the inspectors describing the successful 'never-ending support and dedication' their child received. The recent appointment of a Community, Diversity and Equalities Champion is further evidence of the school's focus on these key areas.
- With useful contacts, for example with the police, issues within the local community are addressed in school if necessary. Extremism has been discussed in philosophy and ethics, deepening students' understanding of different religious perspectives. Students' insight into spiritual, moral and social issues is a strength of their personal development.
- Excellent records of students' progress, easily analysed by different groups, help senior staff to

track the success rate of interventions. Several of these, financed by the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding, are adapted in the light of outcomes and research.

- Mentors and one-to-one tuition have been successful and a breakfast club and activity week subsidies have improved students' well-being and concentration. Access to GCSE revision software is popular and motivates Year 11 students' revision.
- In addition to the numerous extra-curricular activities, trips, visits and visitors, a strength of the curriculum is its relevance to topical, moral and cultural issues. For example, students consider obesity linked to greed and poverty in personal, social and health education lessons, evaluating conflicting views on immigration to the United Kingdom in geography and, in drama, discussing life's values in the context of mental health problems.
- Curriculum changes are only made after careful reflection and input from students. Making timetable changes has increased the number of students, especially boys, taking GCSE French, German or Spanish. Introducing electronics has enhanced the technology options. Provision for gifted and talented students is well considered and goes beyond early entry AS levels and visits to top universities by developing work based on topics students say they find interesting.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well organised, attentive to detail and bases its decisions on facts. Senior leaders provide governors with succinct review papers that describe, for example, the quality of teaching or the possible ways to allocate pupil premium funds.
 - Governors know which subjects perform particularly well and where there is room for improvement. They have discussed early entry for GCSE mathematics to check that no student misses out on the highest grade possible. They are proud of the outstanding progress in the sixth form.
 - All safeguarding and child protection procedures and policies are reviewed regularly. Governors also keep a sharp eye on financial matters, such as whether teachers' pay rises are justified in the light of their students' outcomes. Governors seek evidence that pupil premium funding has been spent wisely.
 - The lack of local authority involvement in the school merely reflects its success and smooth transition to academy status. The school values its links with other secondary schools and the Harrow sixth form consortium.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137075
Local authority	Harrow
Inspection number	412359

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1649
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Wise
Headteacher	Emlyn Lumley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	020 8952 2803
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