

Park High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102236
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	323609
Inspection dates	14-15 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Nigel Fletcher (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	12-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1281
Sixth form	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr John Wise
Headteacher	Mr Tony Barnes
Date of previous school inspection	01 March 2006
School address	Thistlecroft Gardens Stanmore HA7 1PL
Telephone number	020 8952 2803
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Age group	12-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Park High School is a large comprehensive school in Stanmore. It opened a sixth form in September 2007 and a full A-level programme has yet to be completed. The majority of its students are from middle schools in the local area and the school is oversubscribed. Over 80% of the students come from minority ethnic groups, and over half from Indian heritage. The proportion for whom English is not their first language is average and over half the students are bilingual. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around average, although the number with a statement of special educational needs is higher. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. There are more boys than girls in each year group. The school has had specialist technology college status since 2002. It acquired Investors in People status in 1996, which it has retained, while achieving other national awards.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Park High is an outstanding school. It has an extremely caring and inclusive ethos, both within the school and in the outside community, where students respect their teachers and peers in a lively and productive learning environment. Standards reached are above those found nationally, and students achieve well in their learning throughout the school. All students achieve at least one pass at GCSE, and the proportion achieving at least five high grades is above average. The standards achieved and the progress that students make continue to improve year on year. The exemplary senior management team, supported by an excellent governing body, is a key reason for the school's success. The headteacher has a clear vision for the direction of the school, which is shared and supported wholeheartedly by his enthusiastic, conscientious and committed staff. The views of parents, students and the local community are much valued, although some parents would like better communication with the school. There is a strong culture of continual improvement in both academic and personal achievement through lifelong learning. School leaders have an excellent understanding of how the school is doing. They recognise that there are still improvements to make to ensure that all students reach their full potential, for example by honing the rigour with which some curriculum leaders identify areas for improvement such as student achievement.

Almost all parents reported that their children enjoyed school. As one said, 'Both my children are really happy there and motivated by their studies'. Students enjoy good relationships with their teachers. The quality of teaching is good overall, with some examples of outstanding practice. However, not all lessons are planned to meet the differing needs of learners. In a few lessons, where insufficient attention is given to providing interest and challenge to the students, their concentration is allowed to wander and progress slows.

The quality of care, guidance and support is exceptional and, as a result, the personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. Students arrive at school eager to learn, and attendance is high. They behave well around the school and have good relationships with adults and each other. In lessons, students support each other, particularly those with learning difficulties, and make good progress. Parents report favourably on the growing confidence of their children, and the development of skills that prepare students for the world of work is exemplary. Students feel safe, and have an excellent awareness of the need for a healthy lifestyle, particularly in their high levels of participation in extra-curricular sports. The school plays an important part in the local and wider community; for example, its Christmas party brings together senior citizens of all backgrounds and faiths, and it maintains good links with a school in India.

Students appreciate the outstanding curriculum, with academic and vocational options that fully meet their needs, whatever their abilities. The school also provides courses for parents and local schools. There is high participation in the extensive range of cultural and personal development activities that enhance their life at school and improve their personal development. The school has made substantial improvements since the last inspection, and the specialist status in technology is having a good impact on improving learning across the school. One parent commented that, 'Park High is a school with high expectations'. This applies not just to the students, but to the school itself. Consequently, the school has excellent capacity to develop further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The progress in developing the sixth form since 2007 has been outstanding. Inspection evidence indicates that achievement and standards so far are good. However, the school has not yet completed a full programme of A levels, and there are insufficient measurable comparisons able to be made to judge that the overall effectiveness is better than good. Students are extremely positive about their personal and academic development. They enjoy their studies and attend well. They act maturely and are keen to participate in the opportunities offered to them to contribute to both the school and the local community.

Students are highly articulate about the quality of teaching, and the support which their teachers unstintingly provide. Indeed, inspectors observed a high proportion of excellent lessons and agree with the school that teaching and learning in the sixth form are now outstanding. Students are set challenging targets, and their progress is reviewed at weekly

interviews with their tutors. The curriculum is good, and is extended by courses available through the Harrow Collegiate, a consortium of Harrow schools and colleges. Plans are already under way to meet the needs of all students through the introduction of vocational courses, and courses at Levels 1 and 2, in the near future. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. With the support of the school's senior leadership team, the head of sixth form has a clear and inspirational vision for how the sixth form will develop further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement by planning lessons to meet the varied needs of all students.
- Improve the consistency of the rigour with which curriculum leaders analyse the weaknesses in student achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students enter the school in Year 8, part-way through Key Stage 3, with attainment that is broadly average. They achieve well, and reach standards that are higher than average. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, results are above average compared with schools nationally; students make good progress, particularly in mathematics, but not as well in science.

GCSE results are above the national average, representing good achievement, and they continue to improve year on year. The majority of students attain standards higher than the expected level in the majority of subjects. Attainment at the higher levels at GCSE is good although there is some variation in performance between subjects. For example, students do not achieve such high grades in dance, drama, and design and technology, as they do in other subjects. Overall, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades is above average, as is the case when including English and mathematics.

A robust individualised tracking and assessment system identifies underperforming students, and appropriate actions are taken. For example, the 'Who's Not Learning Now' and 'Black Boys Can' programmes support students whose progress is lower than might be expected. Consequently, no specific groups are underachieving.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Harmonious relationships between staff and students, and across cultures, ensure an extremely positive school ethos. Students thoroughly enjoy school. They feel safe, and are confident that they will be listened to if they have a problem. They have an excellent understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students gain excellent social skills and know how to take responsibility for their own actions, and the impact that these have on others. Older students provide very good role models as mentors for younger students.

The school committee plays an active role in the decision making of the school, and the student advisory group for the personal, social and health curriculum has changed the programme to be more relevant to students' needs. Students make an excellent contribution to the wider community through, for example, helping to develop sports skills in younger pupils in the community, providing musical performances at charity events, and by supporting schools in South Africa. Well-targeted literacy and numeracy support, sound information and communication technology skills, and a variety of work-related activities, provide excellent preparation for the world of work and students' future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students' enthusiasm for learning makes a major contribution to the good teaching and learning. Strong relationships between teachers and students create the right conditions for learning, so that students work cooperatively with each other and achieve well. The progress of students is monitored rigorously. Students understand their targets and what they need to do to achieve them. Through the Building Learning Power programme, the school develops students' understanding of how to learn, and their skills for lifelong learning. The school's 'managed learning environment' is effective in providing good access to learning and support, at school and at home.

In the majority of lessons, students are engaged and focused on a variety of activities which capture their interest. Expectations are high, with clear and frequent links being made to strategies for improvement. Peer and self-assessment are used well, and in the best lessons these result in excellent progress being made. Visual aids are used effectively and, together with skilful questioning and lively exposition, stimulate students' learning. However, some lessons are not sufficiently planned for the individual needs of all students. These lessons are uninspiring and too directed by teachers. Students are insufficiently challenged and supported, and easily lose concentration.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum. It is continually reviewed and developed, in consultation with students and their parents, to fully meet the needs and aspirations of all students. The variety of vocational and academic courses available in school, and in conjunction with the local Skills Centre, successfully ensures that all students are motivated to succeed. Almost all students progress on to further education. The school is developing an extended curriculum for students and their parents. For example, through the school's technology specialism, improved provision in design technology and innovative programmes in product design have led to increased involvement with local schools and the community.

The Language in Learning programme throughout the school has a strong impact on improving students' literacy skills in all subjects. Provision for personal, social and health education, work experience and citizenship is excellent and makes a strong contribution to students' enjoyment of school life. There is high participation in the wide range of enrichment opportunities, especially in sports, music and drama, and in trips both in this country and abroad.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Teachers know their students well and work hard to ensure that they enjoy their education and achieve their full potential. Strong links with local middle schools, and particularly effective induction procedures, enable new students to settle in quickly. For instance, support staff from both schools liaise especially well for students with autistic spectrum disorders. They develop memory books which help students discuss new experiences, their feelings about change, and their journey through the school. Well-informed advice and guidance are provided about options and career paths at each key stage.

Detailed assessment information enables the school to track students' progress closely and to set challenging targets. These are reviewed regularly, with parental involvement, as students move through the school. Additional learning support is excellent and ensures that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers. The school makes exemplary use of external agencies to support the personal, social and health curriculum, and to assist students with welfare problems. Arrangements for safeguarding children are sound. Attendance is good, and a robust intervention system ensures that this continues to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school is led by an inspirational headteacher who is supported by an extremely able and clear-thinking leadership team and governing body. This has resulted in considerable improvements in provision and standards since the last inspection. Many excellent and innovative systems have been introduced, centred on improving learning and achievement, some of which have received national recognition. For example, the Building Learning Power initiative is contributing well to the learning of staff, as well as that of students. The monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous, and accurately identifies areas for improvement. Subsequent professional development is very effective in improving performance. Governors' excellent knowledge of the school allows them to provide effective challenge and support in strategic decision making. With staff, they have developed a clear and succinct vision for the school, and are rigorously monitoring progress through the robust 'Review and Planning' programme.

Monitoring and self-evaluation is thorough throughout the school. Weaker departments are improving rapidly as a result of strong management and challenging and supportive action from the leadership team. The quality of evaluations by middle managers is high, but analyses of weaknesses in student achievement are not always sufficiently searching. The school has strong links with its local and wider community, and its promotion of community cohesion is excellent. Particularly noteworthy are its relationships with local communities of different faiths, and its links with worldwide communities through involvement in World Challenge projects. Although the current site is cramped, the buildings are being developed. Day-to-day financial planning and monitoring are excellent and the capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

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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	16-19
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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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well 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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interest of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	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	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	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B



Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

27 January 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Park High School, Stanmore, HA7 1PL

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, talking to your teachers and other staff, and visiting lessons. Many of you and your parents told us how the caring and supportive environment, and your good relationships with teachers, meant that you enjoy school and feel safe there. We judged your school to be outstanding, providing you with excellent care and support, and a good education. We were particularly impressed by:

- your positive attitudes to learning and to each other, and the way in which your confidence and self-esteem develops as you move through the school
- the courses and other activities that the school provides to ensure that you enjoy school and have the best opportunities to make good progress in your academic and personal development
- how the school cares for and supports you in your learning, and when you have other problems or concerns
- the way the school is led, and the commitment of its staff to your well-being.

To make your school even better we have recommended that:

- it helps you do even better in national tests and exams by ensuring lessons are planned to meet all your different needs
- curriculum leaders are more rigorous in looking at what is preventing you from making even better progress.

The senior staff and governors know what needs to be done to improve the school, and have good plans to do it. We believe that if you work hard in lessons, and help the school put these plans in place, then standards will rise further. On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for making our visit so enjoyable, and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Nigel Fletcher
Her Majesty's Inspector