

# Parklands High School

Ganworth Road, Speke, Liverpool, Merseyside, L24 2RZ

**Inspection dates** 5–6 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Students' achievement by age 16 has not improved in recent years. The school's academic performance remains stubbornly among the lowest of all schools in England.
- Too many students do not make the progress that they should in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The sixth form is inadequate. Sixth-form students underachieve by around a grade in their vocational courses.
- The achievement of students supported by the pupil premium generally lags behind that of their classmates. All groups, including the most able students and those who have special educational needs, achieve poorly.
- Many younger students struggle to read and make sense of written information and tasks set by their teachers. They express themselves better orally than in writing. Students' written work is too often scrappy or incomplete, and successive lessons do not build a coherent body of knowledge and skills, underpinned by understanding.
- The majority of teaching requires improvement, and not enough is consistently good. Over time, the impact of teaching on progress is inadequate. Too often, learning is fragmented or superficial.
- Despite recent improvements to systems for monitoring the school's work, self-evaluation is overgenerous. A similarly rosy gloss is put on information, including that regarding teaching quality, given to governors who too often accept it without challenge. The readiness to rely on catch-up strategies is insufficient to drive improvement in outcomes.
- Governors have not held the school to account for its weak performance. They have not always benefited from high-quality information from leaders, for example on teaching quality.
- Sharply falling rolls and turnover of staff have left the school with temporary leadership of English, mathematics, science and special educational needs. Until recently, the school lacked clear drive and leadership. It depends on a significant level of external support.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school provides a nurturing environment for its students. They appreciate the pastoral support, which makes them feel safe. Students say that behaviour has improved.
- Senior leaders have introduced better systems to monitor, support and challenge the quality of teaching. These give a more realistic view of the teaching quality and students' progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 part lessons, including six observed jointly with senior and subject leaders. An inspector made brief visits to a further four lessons to look at the support provided by learning support assistants. Inspectors observed form time and an assembly taken by the acting Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school at work, speaking informally with students and staff around the site during break and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with two governors, senior staff and middle leaders, the sixth-form progress leader, groups of students, and a representative of the local education authority. An inspector spoke to a representative of Bright Tribe, which is a prospective academy sponsor for the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school including achievement data, behaviour and attendance, the school's self-evaluation, development plan, monitoring records and performance management information, minutes of governing body meetings, records of line-management meetings, subject leaders' folders, and information on students who have special educational needs.
- Inspectors took account of the 33 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 26 questionnaires completed by staff.

## Inspection team

Jane Jones, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Eric Craven

Additional Inspector

Bernard Robinson

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.*

### Information about this school

- Parklands High School is a much smaller secondary school than average. In the last couple of years, it has faced a sharp decline in numbers on roll in the main school and in the sixth form. More boys than girls attend but the balance of genders varies from one year group to the next.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is three times the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families, and students who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students who have special educational needs supported at 'school action' is broadly average. At 'school action plus', the proportion is higher than average, as is the proportion who have a statement of special educational needs. The school has resource-based provision for students who have an autistic spectrum disorder.
- The vast majority of students are from a White British background.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Adopt a systematic approach to improving the quality of teaching in all key stages, ensuring that monitoring activities by senior and middle leaders focus on the aspects being developed to secure rapid improvement. The most important priorities in improving teaching are to ensure teachers:
  - are really clear in how they match work to students' needs and potential
  - secure students' progression lesson by lesson and over time by making sure that learning builds on earlier knowledge, understanding and skills and lays foundations for future learning
  - promote strategies to develop and support students' literacy skills so that they can make sense of written tasks and information
  - encourage students to express and develop their thinking orally to support their reasoning abilities and written work.
- Raise achievement in all subjects and key stages (including the sixth form) by securing students' good progress over time through:
  - ensuring that students are clear about what they are to learn, understand and be able to do by the end of each lesson
  - increasing teachers' and students' expectations of the quality of students' written work and their contribution to lessons.
- Increase the effectiveness of senior and middle leadership by:
  - monitoring rigorously and frequently the quality of provision and its impact on learning and then acting robustly on findings
  - developing the role of the progress leaders to place a strong emphasis on monitoring all

students' progress

- securing, as soon as possible, permanent leaders for English, mathematics, science and special educational needs
- making the most of external support to build leadership capacity and effective management practices.

■ Ensure that the governing body better holds the school to account by:

- increasing the rigour with which governors interrogate information from senior and middle leaders about students' progress and attainment, the quality of teaching, and effectiveness of actions to bring about improvement, including use of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding
- undertaking an external review of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of students

### is inadequate

- Students' achievement remains weak. The unvalidated results of Key Stage 4 examinations in 2013 show no real improvement on the low outcomes gained in the preceding two years.
- Data for 2012 and 2013 place the school in the lowest 1% of all maintained schools in England overall and also for mathematics and in the lowest 2% for English. Far fewer than half of the students made the expected three levels of progress in English and mathematics, in comparison with around 70% nationally. Very few students made more progress than this. On average, students attain one GCSE grade below the national average in English and two grades below in mathematics. Students who join the school having achieved Level 5 in national Key Stage 2 tests in primary school fare less well than middle attainers, in part due to early GCSE entry. They did a little better in 2013 than in 2012.
- All groups of students achieve poorly. The small numbers of students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve slightly better than White British students. The achievement of lower-attaining students and boys shows a declining trend.
- Students eligible for support through the pupil premium make up the majority of each year group. They attain less well overall than their classmates, but the gap closed slightly in 2013 and is narrower than seen nationally. While they lagged behind on average by one GCSE grade in English and in mathematics, they outperformed their peers in the humanities and made better progress than them in mathematics. However, leaders were unable to pinpoint what had led to this success or what impact strategies funded through the pupil premium had had last year.
- Nearly two thirds of Key Stage 4 students gain five or more A\* to C passes when vocational qualifications are included. This falls to 31%, which is about half the national average, when English and mathematics are included in the five good passes measure and to the low figure of 10% when GCSE qualifications only are counted.
- Most students in the sixth form re-sit GCSE English and mathematics where they have not already reached GCSE grade C. Although the proportions passing Level 3 vocational qualifications are similar to national figures, the students do not reach the grades that their GCSE results suggest they should. A small number of students who have special educational needs follow Level 1 courses successfully, including some supported through the resource-based provision.
- Students make inadequate progress from their varied, but often below-average, starting points. Over 40% of Year 7 students joined the school with below-average English results at Key Stage 2, and the majority of students in each year group have reading ages below their chronological ages. In lessons, too many students were unable to read key vocabulary or make sense of tasks set, sometimes causing their interest to falter at this point.
- The rates of progress of current students are too low. Sampling of books from Year 8 and Year 11 students showed much work was incomplete, or studied in too little depth, and that their learning in consecutive lessons was often disjointed. A similar picture was evident in observed lessons.

### The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- While much of the teaching observed required improvement, around a quarter was good and slightly less was inadequate. These proportions are lower than the school's evaluation of teaching quality. Because not enough of the teaching is good, students are not making good progress or making up ground on earlier underachievement. Crucially, key weaknesses in teaching combine to impede learning and progress over time.
- Teachers' planning too often did not take sufficient account of students' needs, starting points and capabilities. Sometimes, teachers specified outcomes for different groups in terms of completion of different tasks rather than being precise about how the activities would lead to the

intended learning. At other times, teachers spoke for long periods without checking students' understanding, resulting in their attention wandering. Sometimes, work was pitched at too easy a level and teachers did not move on quickly enough to more challenging concepts or problems.

- The inadequate teaching showed several important weaknesses including poor planning, low expectations of what students could achieve, and weak subject knowledge.
- Some senior leaders were among the group of teachers who enabled students to learn effectively. These teachers had suitably high expectations, and were enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects and so were able to make learning come alive for the students. They defined precisely what each group of students would learn and sequenced the tasks so that students made the intended steps in learning. Their questioning checked students' progress throughout the lesson and they readily adapted their teaching to take account of students' responses or difficulties.
- Some teachers showed a number of these strengths but their lessons came unstuck because students were unable to read or interpret the information or questions set, which slowed their progress. Although the teachers showed an awareness of the importance of key vocabulary, the students did not have relevant strategies for reading unfamiliar words or could not bring meaning to them in the context of the question or information.
- The quality of marking of work students complete in lessons and for homework varied from the cursory 'flick and tick' marking that misses students' errors and gives insufficient recognition of good work, to detailed marking and helpful comments. However, as students do not routinely respond to teachers' comments, there is little noticeable impact on incomplete or poor quality work. One sixth of parents who responded to the online questionnaire disagreed that their child received appropriate homework.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

### require improvement

- Students behaved well in lessons and around the site, with many showing courtesy to visitors. They spoke of improvements to behaviour over the last three years, attributing these to the school's leaders. However, they also acknowledged that behaviour in lessons was best in higher sets where students were motivated to succeed and was sometimes less than good in mixed ability, middle and lower sets. In some year groups, students are placed in the same class for several subjects. They sometimes experience low-level disruption across those subjects. The school has not explored possible links between misbehaviour and the way students are grouped.
- Students' attitudes to learning are less well developed than their understanding of good behaviour, although their cooperation and compliance in lessons, even where teaching was ineffective, was creditable. Yet, too often, half the class sat quietly, unwilling or lacking confidence to volunteer responses, and undertook written work with little sense of energy. Students' rapt attention and enthusiastic comments and questions in a minority of lessons show what is possible when teaching is effective.
- Students say they feel safe in school, bullying is infrequent and any form of name-calling is rare. They were emphatic that they always had more than one person to talk to if they had a problem. Students who are vulnerable or who have special educational needs feel well cared for. However, the school's strengths in pastoral care are not matched by equal attention to realising students' academic potential. While the school's nurturing ethos helps newcomers to settle, including those who have a history of challenging behaviour, rates of fixed-term exclusion doubled during the last school year, rising to just above the national average. The school is planning to introduce alternative ways to manage this through internal exclusion. No student has been permanently excluded in recent years.
- Students who are supported by the resource-based provision benefit from being included in mainstream lessons, coupled with appropriate one-to-one and small-group sessions.
- Students' moral and social development is supported by the school's ethos and programme of extra-curricular support and activities. Students spoke appreciatively of the range of activities including sport, music, homework and revision clubs. They were proud of their business

enterprise team, which won first prize in a Liverpool-wide competition last year.

- The school has suitable systems for keeping track of students' punctuality. Absence is a bigger challenge but the school has worked hard to improve it again this year after a decline in 2013. The school's preparedness to challenge families with the worst track record has led to a reduction in persistent absence and the number of days lost to unauthorised term-time holidays. The relationship between good levels of attendance and higher achievement is displayed prominently around the school.

## **The leadership and management are inadequate**

- The fragility of the school's capacity to improve stems largely from weakness at the top. The appointment of an associate deputy headteacher, employed through the Future Leaders programme for two terms, has strengthened the pool of leadership and management skills. Turnover and loss of staff at middle leadership level have led to the acting deputy and assistant headteachers taking on additional roles including leadership of subjects and special educational needs.
- Work on assessment and progress tracking systems, line management of subjects, and improvement of teaching have gathered pace this term under the leadership of the deputy headteachers, but the capacity for longer-term sustained driving of improvement is a concern.
- The headteacher is the line manager for the rest of the senior team but does not hold responsibility for any specific aspect of provision. She has taken the principal role in the discussions, which have become protracted, around potential sponsored-academy status for the school.
- The pastoral leaders, who are known as progress leaders, play an important role in supporting students in each key stage. However, they are not involved in monitoring, and thereby improving, the progress that students make in lessons and their attitudes to learning.
- The school's self-evaluation was overgenerous and paid too little attention to students' weak achievement and its underlying causes. Discussions with senior leaders during the inspection showed that some had a much better grasp than others on the quality of provision and its impact on outcomes. Systems of monitoring such as work scrutiny, learning walks and lesson observation have begun to be conducted more rigorously but are not followed up quickly enough to drive improvement. For example, the observation of lessons is conducted three times a year and only as part of performance management. Nevertheless, some of the weakest teaching has been challenged appropriately.
- Areas for improvement set at the school's previous inspection have been tackled to some degree, particularly in recent months. The weak teaching of a few staff has rightly been challenged but not enough teaching has improved to good.
- Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.
- The curriculum has been reviewed to provide a better balance at Key Stage 4 between academic and vocational options but these changes have yet to feed through to final outcomes. Younger students now study a broader range of subjects including history, geography, art and music. This term has seen a focus on reading but too little is done to secure students' communication and mathematical skills.
- The sixth-form curriculum has become almost entirely vocational rather than offering a broader range of courses. However, the fall in the number of sixth-form students means that even the limited choice of courses is becoming difficult to sustain.
- Although subject leadership has been affected adversely by staffing changes, some of the senior leaders are bringing additional rigour to the subject leadership role and some acting subject leaders are showing potential and early positive impact.
- The curriculum and teaching make some contribution to students' spiritual and cultural development but more often in an incidental rather than strategic way. An action plan to develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has recently been drawn up.
- The school has received a significant level of support from the local authority across a range of

its work. It has also drawn on support from external consultants, for instance in mathematics. It is not in a position to cope without such support at this point in time and is not always in the position to build effectively on the support. There is scope to use external support to grow capacity, for instance in improving the use of information about students who have special educational needs to plan improvements to provision and to help teachers cater better for their needs in lessons.

- Despite the falling roll and loss of staff, the school continues to operate smoothly on a day-to-day basis, which is a credit to the staff, governors and students. The students who met with inspectors were positive about the school, as were the majority of staff and parents who responded to the online questionnaire.
- The school works hard to foster good relations with parents and the wider community. It promotes equality of opportunity, although this is not successful in realising good academic outcomes for its students. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body has not held the school sufficiently to account for the quality of its work and the achievement of its students. Although minutes of meetings record clear instances of governors asking challenging questions, the response from senior staff has been unacceptably positive, thereby underplaying the seriousness of the situation, or emphasising the use of strategies such as intervention to help improve outcomes. Governors have not got to the root of the issues and have been too ready to accept the school's self-evaluation that its work required improvement rather than recognising that it was failing its students.
  - Like the headteacher, governors have spent a considerable amount of time since the last inspection on exploring the possibility of converting the school to a sponsored academy.
  - The school is building an in-year deficit because of its fallen roll. Funding for the pupil premium last year has not been properly evaluated because it was not precisely targeted to those students' needs. No plan was available for the spending of Year 7 catch-up funding – an important source of funding for those joining the school at below-expected levels, corresponding to around half of the current Year 7 cohort.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	104702
<b>Local authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	429822

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	302
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Steve Casey (Acting Chair)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Yvonne Sharples
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 May 2012
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