



# Purbrook Park School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 116506  
**LEA** Hampshire LEA  
**Inspection number** 279846  
**Inspection dates** 21 June 2006 to 22 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Anne Feltham HMI

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

|                                    |                    |                           |                       |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>              | Secondary          | <b>School address</b>     | Park Avenue           |
| <b>School category</b>             | Foundation         |                           | Purbrook              |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>         | 11 to 16           |                           | Waterlooville PO7 5DS |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>            | Mixed              | <b>Telephone number</b>   | 02392370351           |
| <b>Number on roll</b>              | 876                | <b>Fax number</b>         | 02392617941           |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>       | The governing body | <b>Chair of governors</b> | Mr Andrew Turk        |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b> | 14 February 2000   | <b>Headteacher</b>        | Mr K Clark            |

| Age group | Inspection dates               | Inspection number |
|-----------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 11 to 16  | 21 June 2006 -<br>22 June 2006 | 279846            |

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## **Introduction**

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

## **Description of the school**

Purbrook Park School is a mixed comprehensive school, situated in a residential area to the north of the large urban centre of Portsmouth. Although pupils come from a range of social and economic backgrounds, the area generally has low levels of unemployment and the number of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. Fewer parents than is the case nationally have experienced higher education. The number of pupils with special educational needs is around the national average. This predominantly white school has very few pupils from black and minority ethnic groups, or whose first language is other than English.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a good, improving school which provides an effective education for its pupils who learn in a caring and supportive environment. Attendance is good and the great majority of pupils behave well. Pupils enjoy being at school and have good relationships with their teachers. The expressive arts are a particular strength. The school has retained many strong features since its last inspection, whilst its culture and ethos have changed considerably, opening up opportunities to pupils and staff to contribute to the wider local community - including a federation of local schools - and beyond. Language college status has widened pupils' horizons, enabling them to learn about other cultures and develop confidence in communicating with people from diverse backgrounds. Developing an understanding of, and respect for, difference now underpins the school's inclusive ethos.

Pupils enter the school with around, or slightly above, average attainment and achievement is good. They often attain above average GCSE results and experience particular success in English and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities do well. However, pupils do less well in some other subjects, particularly science. Since 2005 the school has rightly been addressing underachievement in science as a priority; good strategies are now also in place to raise standards in French and information and communication technology (ICT), where results have also been below national averages. These are already having a positive impact. Carefully thought out measures are also underway to increase the overall rate of pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9, particularly for higher-attaining pupils. Pupils' access to appropriate ICT activities in Years 7 to 9 has increased this year, but the use of ICT in other subjects is not yet established in all year groups.

The headteacher and his team provide good leadership and know their school well. The school's self-evaluation is good; through careful analysis of a range of data and regular classroom monitoring, managers have identified strengths and weaknesses accurately. They have been very effective in helping teachers to improve their skills and this has rapidly reduced the gap between best and satisfactory practice. The high quality of many heads of subject departments, several new to the role, is a major strength of management.

Clear improvements in pupils' progress during this year, including in science and languages, are evident, as a result of leaders and managers at all levels vigorously pursuing an improvement agenda. The school provides good value for money and demonstrates clear capacity for further improvement.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve assessment for learning, particularly in Years 7 to 9 and for higher attaining pupils
- Secure improvements in achievement and standards in science and French
- Develop the use of ICT in subjects in Years 7 to 11.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards are above the national average on most measures. The school achieves some but not all of its challenging targets. In tests taken by 14-year-olds, standards in English and mathematics are well above average. In science, standards have fallen and are about average. At GCSE the school does significantly better in many respects than schools nationally, for example in the proportion of pupils achieving five or more higher grade GCSEs including English and mathematics. In 2005, GCSE results dropped in science, French and ICT and pupils underachieved in these subjects.

Achievement is good overall, with faster progress made from 14 to 16 than from 11 to 14. Inspectors recognise that the school, having judged that younger pupils' were capable of more, has taken vigorous action and there is now firm evidence that a marked improvement is under way.

In 2005, pupils in Years 7 to 9 made good progress in English and satisfactory progress in mathematics, but did not make the expected progress in science, especially at the higher levels. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' progress is notably good in mathematics and continuously improving in English, but progress in science is erratic. There are some outstanding individual achievements but some higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Progress of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is generally good. The small number of pupils from black and minority ethnic backgrounds do well. The school is very successful in enabling almost all pupils to gain appropriate accreditation.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are considerate, friendly and support each other well. Their sense of moral and social responsibility is good, as shown, for example, in the 'buddying' system, where older pupils look after younger pupils. The many and varied opportunities for visits to, and contact with, pupils from other schools, countries and continents have developed both their cultural awareness and confidence very well. The pupils' spiritual development is fostered well by regular assemblies and links with a local church.

Pupils feel safe as behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school generally. Bullying and harassment are rare and dealt with well if they occur. Pupils have a good awareness of health issues, shown by their choice of food and drink. Positive attitudes to learning, good attendance and behaviour contribute to their academic progress.

Older pupils can apply to be prefects and carry out many important duties, which contribute to the smooth-running of the school. Pupils' views on school developments are sought via the school council. They also work with their teachers in focus groups, informing decision-making across the school, and in the classroom; for example, teaching styles in history were adapted as a result of pupils' views on how their learning

might be improved. Opportunities to experience the world of work are valued by pupils; these include mock interviews and 'theme days'.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, with some outstanding features. Regular classroom observation and feedback enable senior staff and subject leaders to have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and teachers know how to develop their skills further. Effective practice is identified and, where improvements are needed, rigorous monitoring and support are provided. This has led over time to an increasingly consistent quality of teaching across the school.

Lessons are characterised by positive and productive relationships between staff and pupils. One senior pupil said, "We get on really well with our teachers". There are many effective lessons and some examples of outstanding practice. In the best lessons, teachers identify exactly what pupils will learn. They display strong knowledge of their subject and motivate pupils with humour and a sense of purpose. The lessons progress at a brisk pace and pupils move smoothly from one activity to another. In some good and outstanding lessons, teachers use penetrating and challenging questions that extend pupils' thinking. Teaching assistants provide very effective support for pupils.

In the minority of less effective lessons, pupils have fewer opportunities to develop their independent learning skills. Teachers do not plan as well for pupils of differing abilities, for example the high-attainers. Pupils are made aware of the tasks they will carry out, but do not always understand precisely what they will learn from them. Plenary sessions are sometimes missed, losing the opportunity to evaluate and reinforce what has been learnt.

The school is focusing rightly on assessment for learning. Pupils in many classes are now actively engaged in assessing their own, and each other's, progress, and know exactly what they need to do to improve. However, there remains some variation in the quality of assessment by teachers of pupils' work. In the best examples, pupils are given clear and precise information about what they are doing well, together with precise details of what they need to do to improve. There is a need to ensure that the very best practice is used consistently throughout the school.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is good. In Years 7 to 9, pupils study drama and dance, in addition to all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. They value the opportunities these subjects provide. Intensive literacy work is provided for those pupils experiencing difficulties and there is clear evidence that this enables pupils to make substantial progress.

In Years 10 and 11, all pupils study at least one modern language and there are opportunities to study several. A wide range of academic and vocational courses is available. This includes fast-track AS level and vocational courses that are taught both within the school and in local partnerships. The school has rightly identified the need to increase the range of courses in Years 10 and 11, to give pupils of all abilities the opportunity to learn in a variety of different ways. Pupils appreciate these widening opportunities to follow their interests and aspirations and are very positive about the choices available to them.

Recognising that pupils would benefit from discrete ICT lessons, the school has provided these for Years 7 to 9, but this year's arrangements are very complex and have led to some timetabling confusion. Improved organisation for next year will increase timetabled lessons and current subject auditing has the potential to develop ICT across the curriculum more effectively.

The school provides a very good range of enrichment activities that are well attended. Pupils lead some of these, for example in dance and drama, and participate in community and charity events. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in visits to Europe and further afield, in order to engage in cultural and study programmes. Higher-attaining pupils have access to extension activities, mainly organised within subject departments. The wide range of available activities has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to school and they are very appreciative that staff give so freely of their time.

Specialist status has significantly raised the profile of languages, with an increasing range of European and oriental languages, as well as Latin, on offer, both within the school curriculum and in the evening. The school has set challenging targets for attainment in languages, but has experienced difficulty in meeting all of these. The international dimension to the curriculum is being successfully developed throughout the school and subject areas have cultural and study links with twenty-seven countries. Successful partnerships with parents, local schools and businesses have led to increased language learning throughout the local community.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's provision for care, guidance and support for the pupils is good.

Closer monitoring of pupils' progress by heads of subject departments and tutors has been prioritised by the school to raise achievement; this initiative is at a relatively early stage of development following a restructuring of the pastoral system. The school provides a safe environment; child protection and health and safety procedures are robust and well-understood, with good systems for risk assessment. The canteen now provides a range of healthy food and the school encourages a healthy lifestyle. Infrequent incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly and rigorously. Pupils from black and minority ethnic backgrounds feel safe and well supported in the school.

There are good procedures to aid smooth transition, both when pupils join and leave the school. Sound careers advice and good liaison with local colleges, including 'taster'

days, leads to pupils making informed choices about their future. Pupils with statements of special need and looked-after children are supported well and make good progress. The school has a good system for identifying and supporting pupils' needs. Parents are happy with the school's provision although some would like improved communication between school and home.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school benefits from good leadership and management at all levels. The headteacher works closely with the senior leadership team to run the school effectively and efficiently. Senior leaders know their school's strengths and weaknesses well, and self-evaluation is accurate and honest. The school recognised the need to improve communication with parents and has actively sought the views of pupils and parents. The headteacher provides an energetic role model and both colleagues and pupils value his strong and supportive presence throughout the school.

In recent years, the school has developed close links with other local schools resulting in additional curricular opportunities for pupils and enhanced professional development for staff. This federation of secondary schools has also enabled the school to develop its inclusive practice, offering a fresh start to the small minority of pupils at risk of exclusion.

The school has developed effective and innovative ways of recruiting new staff and ensuring they continue to update their knowledge. Teaching and learning are carefully monitored and strategies identified to address areas of concern. Whilst the improvement of teaching across all subjects remains a priority, the leadership team has identified accurately areas for action and there is firm evidence of continuous improvement in teaching quality and the achievement of pupils.

Strong line management support for subject leaders has resulted in good processes of audit, review and improvement planning. The high quality of many heads of subject departments, several new to the role, is a major strength. They are developing improved procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and their commitment to raising standards is very impressive.

Governors are highly committed and keen to support the school. They have recently introduced potentially effective systems to monitor and challenge the work of the school, with some proven success. Specialist school status has been used very well to widen horizons and prepare pupils for their future in a diverse and international context. Good measures are in place to improve further the quality of teaching and learning, raise standards and achievement, and potential for improvement is good.



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## Inspection judgements

|  |                       |              |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | <b>School Overall</b> | <b>16-19</b> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 2   | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 2   | NA |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage  | NA  | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   | NA |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | Yes | NA |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes | NA |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |    |
|--|---|----|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 2 | NA |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 2 | NA |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | NA |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 2 | NA |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 2 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 | NA |
| The attendance of learners  | 2 | NA |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community                                    | 2 | NA |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 | NA |

### The quality of provision

|   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 2 | NA |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 2 | NA |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 2 | NA |

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 2   | NA |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2   | NA |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review      | 2   | NA |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 2   | NA |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money  | 2   | NA |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 3   | NA |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected  | Yes | NA |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>  |     |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily  | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise  | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse   | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health   | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>   |     |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements                                   | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place  | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism                                | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them   | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>  |     |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships   | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them                   | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>                           |     |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills  | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams                                  | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form          | Yes |
| Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy               | Yes |

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Pupils

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school.

We think your school is a good one, where teachers provide good care and support to help you learn well, make progress and be healthy. As well as providing subject teaching which is often exciting, the school is also developing new areas. For example, it is expanding vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 to give you more choices. As your school has a languages specialism, you have good opportunities to understand how young people across a wide range of countries and cultures live and think, and this will be very important to you in your future life. During the inspection we noticed that you are keen to learn and that your behaviour in lessons is generally of a high standard. You help each other readily, relationships in class are good, and you contribute very well to school life and to the community beyond your school.

In order to become even better, your school needs to: \* help you all make even faster progress in Years 7 to 9\* help you to make better progress in science and French\* give you more opportunities to develop your ICT skills and knowledge. Thank you for taking part in the inspection, by talking to us about your work and your life in school and for making us so welcome.

With very best wishes for your future success,

Anne Feltham

Her Majesty's Inspector