

Parklands High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104702
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	308653
Inspection dates	9–10 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Patrick Geraghty HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	652
6th form	77
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steve Gershman
Headteacher	Mr A Smithies
Date of previous school inspection	25 May 2004
School address	Ganworth Road Speke Liverpool Merseyside L24 2RZ
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Parklands High School is a smaller than average secondary school with a small sixth form. It serves an area with very high levels of social and economic deprivation. More than half of the pupils in the main school are eligible to claim free school meals and this is significantly higher than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high at 48% and a well above average number of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The school is resourced for 20 pupils with complex learning difficulties and eight with autistic spectrum disorders. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and with English as an additional language are well below those found nationally. Parklands is a full service extended school, sharing a site with a city learning centre, sports centre, nursery, library and youth and community centre. The school has a range of awards including: Investors in People, Sportsmark, Inclusion Chartermark, Advanced status in Quality in Study Support and the Liverpool healthy school award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI 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 improvements in the school.

Standards and achievement are unsatisfactory. A pattern of persistent and significant underachievement has existed in this school for several years, notably at Key Stage 4. Standards remain significantly below the national average at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Key Stage 4 results hit a particularly low point in 2007 when only 1% of pupils gained five GCSE passes at grades A* to C with English and mathematics included. Progress at both key stages is inadequate, with significant underachievement evident in English and mathematics. While there are indications of some improvement in standards and in the progress that some pupils make, these are not sufficient nor is there evidence of their sustainability.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are satisfactory. Behaviour has improved although a small minority of pupils still disrupt the learning of others. The school provides a safe environment for its pupils. In particular, the learning support area provides a supportive setting for vulnerable pupils. Exclusions have been reduced. However, attendance remains well below average especially in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' cultural awareness is underdeveloped as is their knowledge of citizenship. Pupils make a positive contribution to the local community and have a satisfactory range of recreational programmes.

Teaching and learning are inadequate. There is too little good teaching. Too many lessons lack the necessary challenge for pupils to explore and extend their understanding. Pupils are passive and lessons are too teacher-led. The curriculum is satisfactory. The Key Stage 3 curriculum has been reorganised into a 'Learning at Parklands' (LAP) thematic course aimed at developing better study skills, self-confidence and improving literacy and numeracy skills. While the Key Stage 4 curriculum has been developed, the school does not presently provide clear enough routes for pupils of varying abilities. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The required arrangements for safeguarding are in place. Vulnerable pupils receive sensitive and responsive help. There are well developed partnerships with a wide range of external agencies to meet a range of complex needs. Arrangements to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effective. Transition arrangements from Key Stage 2 are well organised. Pupils at Key Stage 4 are less clear about the pathways they need to pursue to further education or employment.

Overall, leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The headteacher and senior leaders are not providing sufficient challenge to tackle the school's persistent underperformance. Actions undertaken to enable rapid improvement are not having enough impact. The monitoring of teaching and learning is under-developed. Middle managers do not play a sufficiently robust role in school improvement. While governors show commitment to the school, they have not adequately challenged senior managers on standards and the quality of teaching and learning.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school judges the sixth form to be satisfactory and inspectors agree. Most students are in the sixth form for one year and combine courses to improve their GCSE grades in English and

mathematics with vocational studies in business, retail, leisure and sport. Enrolment procedures have been tightened. Students' progress has improved recently and evaluation of present work suggests students are on line to achieve their targets. Guidance and induction procedures are improving and are satisfactory. Students' progress is tracked with regular feedback. Students praise the good relationships they have with staff and the helpful support they receive. During their time in the sixth form most students develop into more confident and articulate young people and are looking to develop their careers in the world of work. The experience makes students more purposeful. Students play a positive role in mentoring and transition activities in the main school. Leadership and management in the sixth form are satisfactory. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school is aware of where further improvements can be made.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in English, mathematics and at Key Stage 4.
- Improve attendance.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that a higher proportion of lessons are good or better.
- Develop more robust quality assurance systems to enable the effective monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement and standards are inadequate. Pupils enter the school with well below average standards and leave with exceptionally low results. The school recognised that results in 2007 represented inadequate progress in both key stages. Following a two-year period when pupils made good progress in Key Stage 3, the 2007 test results indicated significant underachievement in English and mathematics in Year 9. Pupils make satisfactory progress in science at Key Stage 3. In 2007 the percentage of pupils gaining five GCSE passes at grades A* to C was just 29% and very few pupils achieved this with English and mathematics included. Present tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress indicates that standards will improve; however, at the time of the inspection there was insufficient evidence of significant and sustainable improvement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same progress as others. Teaching observations undertaken during the inspection indicate that the quality of teaching is not good enough to support the rapid rates of learning that are needed to improve achievement. Low levels of attendance, particularly at Key Stage 4, disrupt the learning of too many pupils. While the school has introduced a number of strategies to tackle underachievement, these are currently not having sufficient impact.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory. Relationships with staff and each other are generally positive. However, pupils' cultural awareness and understanding of Britain as a diverse society is underdeveloped as is their knowledge of citizenship. Behaviour has improved with the majority of pupils behaving appropriately in class and around the school. The number of exclusions has decreased. However, disruptive behaviour by a small minority of

pupils has the effect of preventing others from achieving as well as they could in a few lessons. Attendance is well below the national average despite a range of improvement strategies initiated by the school. There is improved attendance in Key Stage 3 but efforts to raise attendance in Years 10 and 11 have been less successful. Pupils feel safe in and around the school. The learning support area provides a safe haven for the more vulnerable pupils. Pupils have some awareness of personal risk relating to substance misuse, sexual activity and internet safety. Pupils report that although some bullying does occur it is dealt with quickly by the school. The school council has been proactive in supporting the introduction of healthier options in the school canteen and the provision of water fountains. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community through charity and voluntary work and performing arts events. Pupils' future economic well-being is addressed through enterprise activities in Key Stage 3 and a range of opportunities at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form including financial literacy, vocational options, work experience and the Young Managers' Programme. However, progress in literacy and numeracy is inadequate and too many pupils fail to access further education or training when leaving school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are inadequate overall and consequently pupils are not making progress quickly enough. The school has an over-optimistic view of the quality of work in the classroom because systems for checking it lack the necessary frequency and detail. The proportion of lessons where teaching is at least good is low. Teaching is better in Years 7 to 9, where teachers plan more thoroughly and are beginning to see the need for a wider range of tasks and approaches to enhance learning and enable greater progress. Year 7 pupils are responding well to the LAP course; for instance, showing keenness to learn and using the protocols for a formal persuasive letter when writing to the Prime Minister. Too many lessons lack sparkle because pupils are given too little opportunity to suggest and explore ideas. Class and group discussion are limited and pupils do not value these activities as ways of exploring and extending their understanding. As a result, too many lessons see pupils quietly and superficially listening rather than being actively involved. Girls especially are too passive and rarely volunteer answers. Teachers' planning is inconsistent in quality and detail, and rarely gives sufficient attention to pupils' standards, potential and needs. Marking is very variable and generally gives too little guidance about how pupils can improve their work. Both teachers and pupils have too low an expectation of the amount and quality of homework to be set and completed. Teaching assistants are used well. Many teachers, too, are more effective when guiding individuals and small groups than when teaching the whole class. There is limited use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhance learning. Most teachers are skilled in managing challenging behaviour.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It has improved since the last inspection at Key Stage 3 where the LAP thematic course is enabling the development of better study skills and greater

self-confidence. Some good transition work with primary schools takes place before pupils join Year 7. The provision of an early vocational course for some Year 9 pupils is successful in motivating them. The Key Stage 4 curriculum, whilst it has widened vocational choice and offers a suitable range of other subjects, does not provide clear enough routes for pupils of varying abilities. Early entry to English and mathematics GCSE is helping to boost the confidence and ambition of some more able pupils. The programme for citizenship does not ensure a clear and consistent experience. The lack of religious education in Year 11 prevents pupils from receiving their statutory entitlement in that subject. The school makes good use of placements in colleges and with other external partners. Work-related learning is satisfactory. Whilst the curriculum provides a satisfactory experience in ICT, pupils get too little opportunity to use and develop their ICT skills in other lessons. A good range of extra-curricular activities notably in sport, music, and extended study opportunities are strengths.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support. Secure arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are in place, including risk assessments for educational visits. Vulnerable pupils and those in public care receive sensitive and responsive help from the learning support team and others in the school. Partnerships with a wide range of outside agencies help to meet a range of complex needs. Arrangements to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well established and effective. Transition arrangements from Year 6 are good. Pupils arrive at the school confident and comfortable in their new surroundings. Pupils, their parents and carers receive guidance when making option choices, although not all pupils are clear about the pathways they need to pursue to achieve their career goals. At Key Stage 3 there are satisfactory systems for tracking pupils' progress and strategies for improvement are in place; most students know their targets and how to improve their work. The impact of the school's actions to reduce the high absence rate has been limited.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. While the headteacher has put time and effort into new initiatives to promote improvement, pupils make insufficient progress and standards remain consistently and significantly below national averages overall. Progress in tackling key priorities has been hampered by significant changes to staffing and, in particular, the absences of leaders in English and mathematics. However, the headteacher and senior leaders are not providing sufficient challenge in tackling the school's persistent pattern of underachievement, especially at Key Stage 4. Systems and strategies to enable rapid improvement have not had enough impact on raising standards. Monitoring systems for internal lesson observations are neither rigorous nor sufficiently focused. Middle management has been strengthened with new appointments to subject leader roles in English and mathematics. However, middle managers are not playing a sufficiently robust role in school initiatives to enable improvement, better self-evaluation, performance evaluation and dissemination of good practice. Although the school's self-evaluation identified key weaknesses, it crucially over-estimated strengths in the

quality of teaching and learning and the effectiveness of management to enable rapid improvement in pupils' progress. Governors are keen and committed. However they acknowledge that they have not sufficiently held senior leaders accountable for standards and the quality of teaching and learning. School leaders and managers are not demonstrating sufficient capacity to make the rapid improvements necessary to secure significant rates of progress in pupil learning. The school gives inadequate value for money.

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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?	4	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	4	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Parklands High School, Liverpool, L24 2RZ

You will remember that we visited your school recently. We spoke with many of you and I want to thank you for your cooperation and willingness to help us. We were grateful for your views on your school and found them helpful. I am now writing to let you know our findings. We believe that there is much to be done to improve your school. We have decided that your school needs 'special measures' to help it to improve. This means that your school will receive extra help and that inspectors will return to check that improvements are being made.

Your headteacher, school managers and teachers have clear ideas about how the school should improve. They are keen to involve you and your parents in this process of improvement. There are some positive features about your school, including improvements in what the school provides for those of you in Years 7, 8 and 9. The curriculum that you study is satisfactory as is the care, guidance and support that you receive. Your behaviour has improved greatly over the last year and this now needs to continue further. The sixth form is satisfactory and is making an important contribution to the whole school. You told us that you feel safe in school.

However, examination pass rates and the progress that you make in your learning are unsatisfactory. Teaching does not challenge you to do your very best and be actively involved in your learning. The attendance of some of you, particularly in Years 10 and 11, needs to improve. The behaviour of a few is hindering others in making better progress. We have asked the headteacher and his team to focus particularly on improvements in the following areas:

- your achievement in English, mathematics and at Key Stage 4
- your attendance
- the quality of lessons, so more lessons are good or better.

We have also asked your school to improve the way that it judges the quality of lessons so that it can develop better ways to improve them.

We know that you will want to help your school to improve. We would encourage you to attend regularly, behave well and work to the best of your ability in all lessons.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you well for your future education.