

Purbrook Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116506
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	326412
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	842
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Hankin
Headteacher	Mr Keith Clark
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2006
School address	Park Avenue Purbrook Waterlooville PO7 5DS
Telephone number	02392 370351
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Age group	11–16
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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 smaller than other schools. Very few students come from minority ethnic groups or have English as an additional language. In comparison with other schools fewer students than average are eligible for free schools meals. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, mainly behavioural and social problems, is higher than that found nationally. The school is designated as an International School with specialist school status in Modern Foreign Languages (MFL). The school was awarded Artsmark Gold for the third time in 2008, and has just been awarded the Sportsmark and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'My child used to struggle academically but since joining Purbrook Park he has matured into a lovely young man and is exceeding our expectations in his studies'.

The view of this parent illustrates the high regard that most parents and students have for the school. Students know they are expected to behave and learn in the positive learning atmosphere the school creates and, as a result, the quality of education is consistently good. Students understand that they are valued as individuals and that their views will be heard and acted upon. Younger students achieve well and, for older ones, GCSE results including English and mathematics continue to be above the national average. The vast majority of students make good progress from their starting points on entry to the school. Very few students leave school with less than five A* to G grades at GCSE and so most go on to take up their chosen career path.

Students appreciate the opportunities available to them and they are maturing as responsible, committed and lively members of the school community. They make an outstanding contribution to the school. This is reflected in good relationships and positive attitudes to learning. Their awareness of personal safety issues is outstanding. For example, students can talk extremely knowledgeably about internet safety and the importance of using cycling helmets, and know why they have to follow safety rules. Students are fully aware of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle although they do not always give up their packets of crisps willingly. Nevertheless, many are eager participants in the extra sporting activities available. Students enjoy coming to school and their attendance is good although the school has had to work hard to improve punctuality. Behaviour is usually good and occasionally it is exemplary, particularly when moving around school corridors that are sometimes very crowded, and in spaces that are restricted by current building work.

The school takes very good care of its students and there is outstanding liaison with a range of agencies. This is effective in reducing and minimising exclusions, improving behaviour and raising self-esteem as well as giving good support to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are most vulnerable. The school's aim that 'no child is left behind' is certainly being achieved through the creation of a culture of good teaching and learning. Many teachers are encouraged to develop their skills creatively and deliver lessons that are engaging and interesting. This makes for lessons that challenge and stimulate students of all abilities. However, teachers do not always give students enough feedback on how to improve the quality of their work. Improved assessment and progress tracking strategies are now in use across all subjects. Outcomes are not yet used consistently to track students' standards and inform students, parents and tutors of these, or to set appropriate short-term targets.

The good curriculum offers students appropriate courses and is being extended to provide greater flexibility and choice. This is helping to motivate students and provide pathways to further education, training and employment. Excellent links with local businesses support the provision for vocational courses. The school's language college status has considerable impact and a wide range of MFL courses are available, such as Japanese. In addition, a dedicated MFL learning support assistant is involved in supporting the learning of the wider community.

A major key to the success of the school is the good leadership and management of the headteacher and senior team supported by good quality middle management and governors. The headteacher puts considerable effort into developing the leadership and management

skills of staff at both senior and middle levels as well as students. As a result, the quality of leadership throughout the school is good and improving and driving the development of teaching and learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that regular and worthwhile feedback to students on the quality of their work informs them of what they need to do to make it even better.
- Ensure that assessment information is used effectively to inform teachers, tutors, students and parents about pupil performance and standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students join the school with average standards and, because of good teaching and support, they make good progress to reach above-average standards in Year 11. In Key Stage 4 the proportion of students gaining five grades A* to C in 2008 was in line with the national average. However, when English and mathematics are included, standards are well above national levels, representing good progress.[0] The school is determined that all students achieve as well as they can and this means that virtually all students gain five GCSE grades A* to G, well above the national average. There are, however, variations between subjects. In particular, standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are well above those in most other subjects. Because of their good achievement, more students than is found nationally leave school to go on to appropriate further or higher education, employment or training. Analysis of current information on students' performance shows that present Year 11 students continue to make good progress and are on track to achieve their challenging targets. Some boys are not achieving as well as they could. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as do those identified as more able.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students are enthusiastic about their school and the vast majority throw themselves wholeheartedly into a wide range of activities, clearly enjoying their learning. They are articulate, reflective, loyal and appreciative of the facilities on offer. Students particularly like the new 'House' arrangements and mixed-age tutor groups as they establish a strong sense of belonging to the school community. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good overall with even the youngest students showing a clear understanding of complex moral and social issues. Students show a secure level of understanding of different faiths and life in other countries but are not sufficiently aware of what it means to live in multi-cultural Britain.

Students make an outstanding contribution to their school and to the wider community, and staff and governors value their views. Students are keen to contribute through their 'Pupil Parliament', questionnaires and other discussions. In particular, they value the opportunities for them to act as 'Pupil Learning Leaders' and observe and comment on lessons and influence teaching. Students are very aware of issues in the local and global community through links with the local hospice and many international schools. Individuals show an excellent understanding of environmental issues and know, for example, how to reduce their carbon footprint.

Students are developing good basic skills that prepare them well for their life ahead. This is helped by the high-quality careers guidance, work experience and college links. These help to ensure that students are aware of the world of work and the range of college places, training and employment available to them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is improving because of the good monitoring of teaching quality. Planning for lessons is good and teachers often use stimulating resources to enliven activities although teachers do not always make the object of the lesson clear to the students. Students learn particularly well when teachers encourage them to think for themselves and they have opportunities to both work in groups and to learn independently within well-structured lessons. They thrive on a variety of activities that capture and keep their interest and relish the opportunities to evaluate one another's work. Teachers' skills in using information on student performance are improving. This is having an increasingly positive effect as teachers and senior managers are better at using information to track and analyse students' performance. Although individual students' work is marked regularly, consistent advice and feedback on improvement is not always given. Behaviour and relationships are good and there is a real sense of enjoyment in learning. Classroom support assistants are effective in helping students with differing needs and aid good learning by ensuring students are fully engaged.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's specialism is reflected strongly in the curriculum as good use is made of local and international links to broaden the range of curriculum opportunities. Along with the variety of MFL courses, students benefit from links with numerous other schools around the world. The extended and creative use of information and communication technology has made ongoing communication with distant schools much easier. The good curriculum in place for Key Stage 4 is flexible in meeting students' needs. While most students follow GCSE courses, the school is working hard to provide alternatives for those for whom this provision is not entirely suitable. For those students who are less suited to purely academic courses, there are growing opportunities to pursue vocational Business and Technology Education Council courses and the school is planning with a local consortium to offer a number of diploma courses in September 2009. Students who are more able have the opportunity to pursue studies in some more specialist areas such as advanced courses in archaeology as well as film studies. As one parent commented 'the school provides our child with an excellent all-round approach to lifelong learning'.

Many visitors come to the school bringing experience from the world of work into lessons. For example, engineers work with the design technology department. Where relevant to their courses, students have good opportunities to work out of school, for instance undertaking geography fieldwork. Students and parents appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities available. In particular, the numerous sporting opportunities are enhanced by contributions from a local sporting partnership. Participation rates in all activities are high.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral support is a strength of the school and comes from a dedicated team of teachers, committed to the ongoing welfare of each individual. Parents appreciate the school's efforts to make transition from primary schools as easy as possible and describe the process as 'smooth'. Students feel valued and respected because the school takes good care of them. The safe and supportive environment enables students to flourish, they have justifiable confidence that their problems will be listened to, and that action will be taken as necessary. This has helped reduce bullying and exclusions to negligible levels and has enabled students to share sensitive issues. There are good and secure arrangements for safeguarding students in lessons and around the school. All vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by the specialist support staff who work very effectively with outside agencies to support any students who may be at risk. Tutors play a key role in monitoring students' standards and progress. However, the information that is given to them is not always as good as it might be.

Students are given very comprehensive guidance when making choices about future careers and courses. For example, the 'Job Shop' is very successful in preparing students for real-life job-seeking situations.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher clearly knows his school very well and makes perceptive judgements about what the school must do to continue improving. He is supported in this work by an effective senior leadership team and a dedicated governing body. There is a strong sense of common purpose among staff and good collaborative working relationships. Students also contribute to the leadership and management activities of the school through their roles as associate governors, interviewing candidates for teaching posts and observing lessons. Honest self-evaluation gives an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development and is supported by an appropriately tailored programme of training. All staff in the school have a good impact on increasing students' understanding of the UK and global communities while teaching them to value diversity. Financial management is good; resources are well managed and focused in areas where they will have the most impact on learning. The governors are strong supporters of the school and their understanding of their responsibilities for holding it to account for its performance continues to improve. The successes that have been achieved so far, together with the commitment and drive to build on them, indicate that there is good capacity for further improvement.

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

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

04 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Purbrook Park School, Waterloo, PO7 5DS

After our visit to Purbrook Park, we would like to share our findings with you and thank you for your friendly welcome and for taking time to talk to us. You tell us that the school is 'great' and we agree with you. Purbrook Park is a good school. We are very pleased that you enjoy it so much and make the most of the wide opportunities available to you. You are very appreciative of not only the good teaching but also the sporting opportunities and wide range of clubs.

The school takes very good care of you. You tell us that you feel safe and that there is always someone to turn to when you need help. You speak highly of your teachers' readiness to assist you. Many of you make a difference through the Pupil Parliament, acting as Pupil Learning Leaders, and through your work in the wider community such as raising funds for charity. Your headteacher, governors, and your many very committed teachers have put in place a good curriculum that is well taught and therefore you make good progress. Most of you come to school regularly but a few of you are not always on time.

Because you cooperate so well with what your school is trying to do for you, we are convinced that you will continue to support your teachers' efforts and go from strength to strength in developing your personal skills as well as your academic prowess. You can help in this by:

- acting on the regular and worthwhile feedback on the quality of your work we have asked your subject teachers to give you so that you know what you have to do to make it even better
- making sure you know and understand the standards you are reaching in your work. We have asked your teachers to make better use of the assessments and test results they collect and to give you, your parents and tutors this information.

Everyone wants Purbrook Park School to keep on improving. We think if you keep working and learning together, you will do just that.

With very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Christine Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector