

Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119867
Local Authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	301949
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	165
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jennifer Allcock
Headteacher	Mr Keith Berry
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2004
School address	Park School 158 Whitegate Drive Blackpool Lancashire FY3 9HF
Telephone number	01253 764130
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Park School is one of three community special schools in the local authority. Attainment on entry to the school is significantly below the national average. All pupils have a statement of the additional provision required to meet their specific learning or other needs. The school caters for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties, but increasingly children with more complex needs, including emotional, social and behavioural needs, are being placed at the school. Most pupils come from areas of social deprivation. The school has gained awards for the quality of its provision, including Healthy School, Investors in People and ArtsMark Silver.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Park School is outstanding. The pupils are happy and they make excellent progress, many of them continuing into further education (FE) when they are 16. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and many wrote with glowing comments, for example, about a younger pupil: 'I feel I could not have made a better choice than to send my child to Park School', and of an older pupil: 'Since attending Park School he has become a happy, confident young man who now feels he has a purpose in life.'

The school provides a high standard of care, guidance and support so that the pupils feel valued and encouraged to fulfil the school motto 'We grow together, we learn together, we will achieve our best together'. Teaching is good; the lessons are lively and hold pupils' interest well. The curriculum is good; it is wide-ranging, with good opportunities for creative and imaginative work. The school helps pupils with their basic skills of literacy and numeracy. This is complemented by an excellent link with a local maintained secondary school where all Year 11 students take an entry level course in information technology (IT) and can be entered for a number of GCSE qualifications. The school is quite rightly keeping its curriculum under review to ensure it continues to meet the changing needs of the pupils.

Most importantly, Park School does an excellent job of promoting pupils' personal development, right from the outset. The school provides outstandingly well for children in the Foundation Stage: staff use a variety of assessments to present pupils with challenging targets and wide curriculum opportunities. As a result, pupils enjoy school and feel safe in a caring environment.

Pupils develop good social skills and have good attitudes to learning. They feel confident in taking an active part in everything that is on offer around them. The leadership and management of the school are excellent: experienced and enthusiastic, with a clear understanding of how well pupils are doing and how to improve the school further. The school is vibrant and there is a real sense of team work throughout.

What the school should do to improve further

- Keep the curriculum under review to ensure that it continues to meet the changing needs of the various groups of pupils and remains appropriately balanced, including the promotion of basic skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Owing to their learning difficulties and/or disabilities pupils' standards are very much lower than those expected of their age. However, pupils make excellent progress by the time they leave, as reflected in data which place the school in the top band nationally, when compared to similar schools. At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils perform at a level commensurate with their ability, with a comparative strength in science. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils continue to make progress in line with the school's expectations, showing strengths in mathematics and science. The English department is working effectively on improving the reading programme.

The pupils' standards in literacy and numeracy improve sufficiently for them to be able to follow examination courses in Key Stages 3 and 4 and to be successful in examinations, with the assistance, if required, of extra time or help. A significant number of students have gained grades at GCSE in science and individual students have also been successful in English, art and

design, drama, physical education (PE) and mathematics. Students' overall skills improve to the extent that most are able to continue learning into further education.

The rate of progress is maintained across all key stages, with little variation between boys and girls or between subject areas. Pupils make rapid progress because of the very good relationships between staff and pupils and also in those lessons where there is regular activity-based learning, including the use of ICT. In the Foundation Stage children make particularly impressive progress, settling quickly and building rapidly on what they have learnt. Pupils achieve equally, regardless of their learning difficulties or personal circumstances.

Pupils' ICT skills are good and they use them effectively in other subjects. Pupils make the most noticeable progress in developing their social skills and, thus, in their relationships with others and in their confidence for the future.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development of pupils is seen as a priority in the school. All staff have their part to play in reinforcing the main messages for personal development. Progress in social skills starts very early, in the Foundation Stage, where children soon pick up daily routines and make fast progress in making relationships and in developing vocabulary. A comprehensive personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) throughout the school underpins the work on personal development, and raises pupils' awareness of how to keep safe and healthy.

The curriculum gives pupils regular opportunities to develop their basic skills in numeracy and literacy to help prepare them for life beyond school. The excellent link with Palatine Community Sports College brings the older students into contact with others whose background and skill levels are different to theirs. This increases students' confidence and self-esteem and, as a result, their attitudes to learning generally: a 'can do' approach, encouraged by all the staff.

Pupils really enjoy the extra-curricular activities in music, sport, the visits out of school and the residential programme. The brass band, composed of senior school pupils and a few staff, is well-known and plays frequently in the community and at local competitions. It is an outstanding example of inclusion.

Behaviour is good, the result of the interesting lessons and the extensive work the school has done to promote good behaviour, through improving procedures, responses and recording. Systems to monitor pupils' behaviour are thorough. Parents can contribute through pupils' annual reviews and by consultation, such as on the updating of the school's 'Golden Rules' for behaviour.

As a result of all that the curriculum offers, and the excellent, trusting and caring relationships with staff, the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. Pupils care for each other; they listen patiently and work co-operatively in lessons. Older students take on mentoring roles to help the younger ones. Pupils are friendly and confident. Parents commented very positively on this, and on the pupils' enjoyment of school, in their questionnaires.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The relationships between teachers and pupils are a real strength. Teachers encourage pupils to try their best and they take great care to prepare stimulating and active lessons, with a good range of activities and imaginative resources. This helps to keep pupils interested, so that they stay on task for longer. Lessons are often fun and can be quite challenging, especially for older pupils. Teachers explain points clearly and patiently and often use ICT to enliven lessons. A Year 10 English lesson with a text about Loch Ness was brought to life by the 'real' sounds of the monster and photos on an internet site. Classes are small and time is managed well, with learning assistants providing excellent support. Older pupils benefit from the additional challenge and expertise provided by specialist subject teachers and facilities, such as in science and the creative arts.

Pupils make excellent progress over time, given their learning difficulties. Learning in individual lessons tends to be in small steps, with reinforcement and repetition in the lessons that follow. The lesson plans show that pupils' statements of educational need have been considered. Effective records are kept of the progress pupils make.

Teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can do and they establish effective work routines in the lessons. In this way, all aspects of the curriculum contribute to developing pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Teachers in different subjects take opportunities to reinforce, for example, organisational skills or social skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets pupils' needs. The school recognises that to meet the changing needs of the pupils, monitoring and review of the curriculum must become a higher priority. There is a good balance between core subjects and wider-ranging experiences, such as creative and aesthetic work. This means that pupils enjoy learning, because they like practical lessons. Resources are good and ease of access to ICT enhances learning. The curriculum is further enhanced by visits to places of interest and from speakers, who contribute in particular to PSHE, making the curriculum relevant to pupils' lives.

The school has excellent links with the local secondary sports college, which both Key Stage 3 and 4 students attend for some lessons. Students have excellent opportunities to gain qualifications as units of accreditation and, if they show the ability, can do GCSEs in English, mathematics, science, drama, art and design, ICT and PE. Take-up of examination courses is growing. All Key Stage 4 pupils also attend FE College. There is a good programme of work-related learning, including taster vocational courses. This has been expanded to incorporate agriculture and animal husbandry.

Year 9 students attend the sports college for PE, and a few students get involved also in other curriculum areas. Enrichment activities such as industry, careers and charity fundraising days give students from both schools the opportunity to mix, helping understanding and acceptance, whilst also giving the Park School students greater confidence.

Provision for music and drama is a strength, contributing greatly to students' enjoyment of school and allowing them to contribute very well to their community. The school has extended

the range and uptake of extra-curricular activities since the last inspection, and this is much appreciated by the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care offered to pupils at the school is outstanding. All staff work as a team to ensure that pupils are able to thrive in a safe and secure environment. The start of the day is an example of this, when pupils are escorted from minibus transport in a safe, calm and supervised manner. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are regularly reviewed and risk is carefully monitored. Careful attention is given to pupils' medical needs, no matter how small, to make all staff aware of potential difficulties and barriers to learning.

Communication with parents is particularly effective and the liaison worker makes a very good contribution to this. Detailed home-school agreements are negotiated with parents so that all have a clear understanding of the school's expectations, including good attitudes to learning and good attendance. Parents' views are considered through regular questionnaires. Pupils at risk, such as those in care, are identified and very well supported. An on-site youth club and an after-school care facility are provided for existing and ex-pupils.

Child protection procedures are robust. All staff have undertaken child protection training, with staff in co-ordinating positions having additional training. The school has very good relationships with external agencies, including the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

The Connexions Service plays a significant role in the guidance and support offered to pupils. All in Year 9 are interviewed before their transition reviews and play a central part in the review process. The 'Transitions' booklet produced by the Connexions service, in conjunction with the school, helps parents and pupils make informed decisions about pupils' future plans. Park School pupils have helped in producing materials for use in other schools.

Staff collect comprehensive data on the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. This information is shared to set targets, inform reviews and assist in comparing portfolios of pupils' work. Detailed individual educational plans are reviewed regularly to adjust targets and if there are concerns about progress, strategies to support pupils are timely and suited to need. Parents, carers, and other agencies are kept informed of outcomes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and senior managers, has showed considerable vigour and determination in leading a programme of continuous development of the teaching, the facilities and care. He has drawn on the expertise and advice of the local authority to keep teaching methods, systems and resources up to date. Governors challenge and support well.

Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Key posts have been created to manage behaviour and home-school liaison, to very good effect, resulting in improvement. There are fewer exclusions, for example. The teachers and assistants have benefited from good professional development so that they are increasingly able to teach and assist in both the primary and the secondary sections. Middle managers' skills have been developed further so that they have the

confidence to conduct the planning and evaluation of their subjects. The school operates as a close-knit team of enthusiastic, committed teachers and assistant staff. It provides good value for money and it has high capacity to improve further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 May 07

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Park School, Blackpool, FY3 9HF

I am writing to say thank you for talking to us and for helping us when we came to inspect your school recently. This is what we think about your school:

- Park School is outstanding- that means we think it is super!!
- We know you find the work difficult, but we think you are doing really well.
- Mr Berry, the teachers and all the other adults in school work very hard to help you. You told us how much they take care of you and we agree.
- The lessons are good. You are right- they are often fun.
- Your behaviour is good. You try hard in the lessons.
- It is good that you have the chance to get qualifications when you are older. That will help you when you go on to college or look for a job.
- There are lots of interesting subjects and activities for you to do.
- You told us about going to Palatine School and the college sometimes. This is an excellent idea and it lets you meet lots of new people.
- You told us how much you like the clubs and the trips out of school. We really enjoyed listening to the brass band. It is quite famous round about, and we can see why! What a lovely opportunity this is for you to all play together!

Mr Berry is a great headteacher. He has good ideas for how to make the school even better. He keeps a close eye on what is happening in school. We have asked him to keep doing this, so that you keep enjoying it. Keep trying your best!

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon

Her Majesty's Inspector