



William Parker School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114610
Local Authority East Sussex
Inspection number 296129
Inspection dates 29–30 November 2006
Reporting inspector David Butler HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Parkstone Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Hastings
Age range of pupils	11–18		TN34 2NT
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	01424 448236
Number on roll (school)	1129	Fax number	01424 461472
Number on roll (6th form)	193		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	P Southee
		Headteacher	Derek Greenup
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	29–30 November 2006	296129

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

William Parker is the only single sex boys' school in East Sussex. It is larger than average and is substantially oversubscribed. Almost all students live in the Hastings area. The school operates a joint sixth form with Helenswood Girls' School. Less than 5% of students are from minority ethnic groups and few students have English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities has risen substantially since 2000 and is well above average. The school has been a specialist sports college since 1998.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

William Parker provides a good standard of education and care for its students. The school has improved since its last inspection and has strong capacity to improve further. The school has a very positive and caring ethos. Students are proud of their school, enjoy their education and most have very good attitudes to learning. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the great majority feel it is doing a good job. The school's specialist designation has played an important part in enriching the curriculum, raising students' self-esteem and improving behaviour.

Students make good progress and achieve well. Test results at the end of Year 9 are in line with national averages and above those for boys. The proportion of students attaining higher grade GCSE results is below average but in line with those for boys. Too few students attain higher grade GCSE passes in mathematics.

Students make good progress and enjoy their education because they are well taught and the curriculum is designed to meet their individual needs. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make very good progress, reflecting the excellent care, guidance and support they receive. Relationships between students and teachers are good and students find their teachers helpful and approachable when they encounter difficulties. While teaching is good overall, there is variation, for example, in the quality of marking and the use of assessment to support learning.

Students feel safe and well cared for in school. Incidents of bullying or other forms of harassment are rare and are dealt with effectively when they occur, sometimes by older students who have been trained as peer mentors. Students have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles and benefit from the very good programme of physical education, including excellent opportunities to participate in team and individual sporting activities. Students make an effective contribution to the school and the wider community, for example, through the school council and links with local organisations. Students feel well supported in making choices for careers and further education and are reasonably well prepared for future employment, although their broader business and enterprise skills are not well developed.

Managers and governors provide effective leadership and management and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas needing development. However, the new school development plan is behind schedule and does not yet include measurable outcomes. The school works effectively with partners and other agencies to support students' education and well-being. There is extensive monitoring of lessons but the information gathered from this is not always used as effectively as it might be to share best practice. The areas identified for improvement in the last inspection report have been tackled, with the exception of the provision for food technology in Years 7 to 9.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students enjoy their sixth form experience and make good progress. The great majority of students successfully complete their courses. Standards in examinations are generally in line with national averages, representing good achievement for boys. Students benefit from good teaching and the wide range of courses made possible through effective collaboration with the partner school. Students appreciate the good care and support they receive, for example, in dealing with personal and academic problems and in applying for higher education. Their views are listened to and acted upon. Their personal development is good. The school knows its students well and carefully tracks their progress. There is particularly effective support for students with learning difficulties or disabilities, enabling them to progress well. Students enjoy a wide range of cultural, sporting and leisure activities, many of which they organise themselves. They contribute well to the school by participating in and leading school clubs, and to the wider community by activities such as raising money for charities and presenting drama performances in local venues. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in GCSE mathematics for higher attaining students.
- Ensure that the school development plan is completed without delay and that it includes measurable outcomes for success.
- Share best practice more effectively to improve consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Make provision for food technology in Years 7 to 9.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' standards on entry to the school are broadly average but there is a smaller proportion of higher attaining students than is found nationally. Test results by the end of Year 9 are in line with national averages. GCSE results are below average but in line for those attained by boys. Progress by the end of Year 9 is very good in English and mathematics and satisfactory in science. Progress in English by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory but GCSE results for the past two years in mathematics show there is underachievement by potentially higher attaining students. Progress in other subjects in Years 10 and 11 is generally good. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities and students whose first language is not English make good progress. Most targets are met but unconfirmed data for 2006 indicate the school was slightly below its target for higher grade GCSE results. Standards in the sixth form are close to national averages and students achieve well, with a high proportion completing their courses and gaining qualifications.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students in the main school and the sixth form enjoy their education and have positive attitudes towards learning. Although a few parents expressed concerns about behaviour, most students behave well in lessons and around the school. Permanent exclusions are very low. Fixed term exclusions have been reduced but the school recognises there are still too many and is taking steps to reduce them further. Attendance has improved and is above average. Punctuality is good.

Students' spiritual, moral and social development is strong. Students have a clear sense of what is right and wrong and show a high degree of tolerance and respect for others. Assemblies and activities such as Remembrance Day services provide appropriate opportunities for reflection. Older students provide good role models for younger students. Year 7 students are very complimentary about the support provided by Year 11 mentors in helping them settle into school. Cultural awareness is well developed through a range of high quality extra-curricular activities, including visits and international links. The views of students are taken seriously and the student council can point to improvements they have helped bring about, such as improving access to drinking water and introducing lockers for cycling helmets. There is a strong emphasis on developing healthy lifestyles, reflecting the school's specialist designation. The school has achieved the Healthy School's Silver award and the Sportsmark Gold, awarded with Distinction. Students adopt safe practices, for example, in science lessons and in their conduct in narrow and crowded corridors.

Students have reasonable skills in literacy, numeracy and information technology and develop other skills required in later life through the programme of careers education and citizenship. Students taking business and vocational courses develop good business and enterprise skills and understanding but these are less well developed in other students. There are plans to extend the provision for enterprise education for all students in Year 10 during the current academic year.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good in both the main school and the sixth form and there is some which is outstanding and worthy of sharing more widely. Weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics in Years 10 and 11 have resulted in some underachievement by higher attaining students. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and a good understanding of examination requirements. Lessons are well planned and generally include a variety of activities and tasks to maintain the interest and motivation of students. Teachers promote the development of literacy by emphasising key words

and ensuring students understand appropriate technical terms. Occasionally, teachers fail to check whether students have grasped the learning points before moving on. In a small minority of lessons, the tasks set are insufficiently interesting and challenging, resulting in loss of attention and slow progress. There is some very good assessment practice but this is not consistent. In some cases, students' work is not marked regularly enough and, in others, students are given insufficiently detailed written advice about how to improve the quality of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum in both the main school and the sixth form is good and it is tailored to meet the individual needs of students. For example, special provision is made in Years 8 and 9 for gifted and talented students. There is a wide range of courses in Years 10 and 11, including vocational options, some of which are provided through partnerships with the local college and other agencies. Almost all students are given their first choice of subjects in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. The specialist designation has helped to enhance the curriculum in various ways, such as a course targeted at students at risk of being excluded. Students in the main school and the sixth form benefit from the excellent provision of enrichment activities, reflected in the school achieving both the Sportsmark and Artsmark gold awards. The lack of facilities and provision for food technology in Years 7 to 9 were identified as concerns in the last inspection report and these have not yet been resolved.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The care, guidance and support provided for students, including those in the sixth form, are good. There is excellent support for students with learning difficulties or disabilities and for students in public care. Strong links with a wide range of external agencies enhance this provision. The school works well with parents and carers. The quality of pastoral care is strengthened by the work of the school chaplain and counsellors. Good links with primary schools help students settle in quickly in Year 7. Effective support and guidance are provided by the school and the Connexions Service to help students make their choices about courses in Year 10, and about further and higher education, training and employment. There is good tracking of students' academic progress and support is focused on students who are identified as underachieving. Additional lessons and revision classes are provided in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form to help students achieve well in examinations. Students are set challenging targets, based on their prior attainment in national tests and their GCSE grades. Students are aware of these grades but they do not always understand exactly what they mean and what they need to do to reach them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management at all levels, including the sixth form, are good. There is a clear, accurate and shared understanding of what needs to be improved, based on an analysis of data, monitoring of lessons, external evaluations and the views of students and parents. Management has been successful in raising achievement, enhancing the curriculum and improving standards of behaviour. Staff morale is high and there is a good retention of teachers. The provision for meeting the differing individual needs of students and for tackling discrimination is excellent. Governors know and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and discharge their responsibilities effectively.

Senior managers monitor and evaluate teaching and learning well, and carry out regular reviews of curriculum areas. The information gathered from this is used to target support but insufficient use is made of it to share good practice in teaching, learning and assessment. The process of completing a new school development plan, based on the five main targets set out in Every Child Matters, has fallen behind schedule. Priorities for improvement have been identified and these are well known and understood throughout the school, but there are as yet no measurable criteria to enable managers to assess how effectively the plan is being implemented.

Resources are used efficiently and the school provides good value for money. The large budget deficit the school had at the time of the last inspection has been eliminated. Good use has been made of professional development opportunities to improve the effectiveness of curriculum coordinators.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

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

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
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	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

- On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you for the help you gave us with the inspection and the warm and friendly way you greeted us. The overwhelming majority of you are very proud of your school and feel it is doing a good job. We agree with these views and think that the school is capable of improving further to become an outstanding school. Most of you make good progress in your work and achieve well because you have good attitudes to learning and you are taught well. Some of the other things we particularly liked about your school were:
 - your enjoyment of education and the way you care and support each other
 - your personal development, including leading safe and healthy lifestyles
 - the care, guidance and support provided, particularly for those of you who do not find learning easy
 - the behaviour of the great majority of you in lessons and around the school
 - the way the courses provided for you try to meet your individual needs
 - the excellent range of sports and other enrichment activities available to you
 - the way the school is led and managed to try and ensure you receive the best possible education and care.

We have asked the school to make some improvements. GCSE results in mathematics are too low and need to be raised. We saw some excellent teaching and learning and feel that this needs to be shared more widely between teachers. The new school development plan needs to be completed in a way that allows the school to measure its progress. Several of you and your parents felt that food technology should be part of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9. We agree and have asked the school to introduce it.

Best wishes for the future.