

# Park House

Wisbech Road, Thorney, Peterborough, PE6 0SA

<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–8 May 2015	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good school.

- Good leadership, including from the proprietors, provides a nurturing approach which improves pupils' behaviour and personal development well.
- Well-targeted training for teachers and therapists benefit pupils. Pupils improve their communication skills effectively and are provided with subjects matched to their stage of development.
- Pupils' understanding of democracy is promoted well. Pupils learn democracy as they choose what lunchtime clubs to join and what role to play in managing the school's enterprise project.
- Pupils learn tolerance of each other's disability. They learn tolerance of the views of pupils from different faiths.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils not able to work as part of a group prior to coming to this school now do so well.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe, particularly in the workplace.
- Teachers change their plans to adapt to the needs of individual pupils and provide relevant activities to enable them to achieve well.
- Pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science.
- Provision for the current sixth form students, all of whom have complex needs, prepares them well for their next stage of their education and life.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Assessments of pupils are sometimes insufficiently used to set them activities at the correct level of challenge.
- On occasions, key workers do not contribute enough to pupils' learning.
- Key Stage 4 pupils entering the sixth form next academic year are higher achieving compared with previous years, but there are no accredited vocational subjects on offer for them in the sixth form.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited lessons to observe the learning of pupils. These were taught by a range of different teachers and therapists. Two of the lessons were observed jointly with the Principal.
- Pupils' work was examined across the school. The inspector listened to pupils read in lessons.
- Meetings were held with the proprietors, senior and middle leaders and other members of staff, including the business manager. Informal discussions took place with pupils. In addition, a meeting was held with the Chair of the Management Committee.
- Before the inspection started, the inspector checked policies on the school's website and evaluated the safeguarding policies. Documents relating to pupils' academic and social progress and the school's self-evaluation and business plan were reviewed. The inspector also looked at curriculum and assessment policies and records of teaching and policies relating to pupils' safety.
- There were insufficient responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents) for reliable analysis. However, a number of parents submitted hard copies with detailed notes and the inspector carefully considered these. The inspector also looked at 31 Ofsted questionnaires returned by staff.

## Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Park House School provides for pupils aged six to 19 years with autistic spectrum disorder. Almost all pupils have additional disabilities and learning difficulties.
- All pupils have statements of special educational needs (currently being transferred into 'education health care plans'). Their additional needs include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, pathological demand avoidance, obsessive compulsive disorder and dyspraxia. A few pupils have severe learning difficulties. Some pupils have very complex and severe challenging behaviours and social communication difficulties.
- The school takes pupils from the following local authorities: Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Norfolk, Rutland and Bedfordshire.
- The school is located in a converted house with a number of outside buildings situated in a large park area.
- The school makes use of alternative provision, such as a local farm for work experience.
- There are significantly more boys on roll than girls.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. All pupils speak English as their first language.
- Every pupil has an allocated key worker. A teaching assistant carries out this pastoral and learning support role and also has the responsibility for liaising with families. This is overseen by the pastoral leader within school.
- There are a number of changes since the last inspection:
  - the number on roll has increased
  - a building programme is ongoing to provide specialist science and music accommodation and an accessible toilet
  - the chapel in the village has been purchased by the school to be used to enhance pupils' education
  - a management committee has been established to provide challenge and support to the school
  - the Principal (also a proprietor) retires from her role as Principal in July 2016 and a new head of education has been appointed to start in September 2015.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding in all subjects, so as to raise achievement, by ensuring that:
  - teachers consistently use assessments about what pupils know and can do to set them work at the correct level of challenge and move them on to new learning
  - key workers (teaching assistants) always contribute to pupils' learning in all lessons
- Plan and implement accredited vocational subjects in the sixth form so as to:
  - provide for higher achieving pupils currently in Key Stage 4 who will enter the sixth form next academic year in order to raise their achievement, enhance their employability skills and get them ready to transfer to college.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders have created a challenging and nurturing culture where pupils have an equal chance to succeed. The Principal's vision to enable pupils to overcome anxiety to learning, so that they achieve well, is shared by all staff.
- Therapeutic and education staff work in an effective partnership to get pupils ready to learn. Once ready, pupils make good academic and social progress. Discrimination in respect of disability or race is not tolerated. Pupils are encouraged to make allowances for each other's disability, and many do.
- Leaders regularly check the impact of teaching on learning. They provide good training for teachers from monitoring their needs. Teachers respond well and improve their teaching, which benefits pupils.
- Senior leaders carefully monitor attendance and make immediate contact with a local authority if there is a concern. This results in exceptionally high attendance. Behaviour is monitored closely in order to bring about further improvement. There is a clear system for tracking pupils' academic progress over time and it is used to plan for even better academic performance.
- Leaders know their school well. They frequently carry out analysis on what is going well and what is not going so well. Decisive action is then taken to bring about further improvement, as seen in the development of the curriculum to improve physical education that impacts on pupils' ability to begin to work together as a team.
- Teachers mostly use assessment well. In the best examples, they set work which is precisely matched to the needs of pupils and this accelerates their learning exceptionally well. However, this is not yet consistent, and sometimes pupils are not sufficiently challenged in lessons.
- Leaders ensure that the welfare needs of pupils and their families are met. The school's pastoral leader visits pupils' homes frequently and gives parents good advice on how to manage their children's behaviour at home. Parents say that that this impacts on their improved behaviour at home and, because staff also learn from parents on these visits, there is also a positive impact in school.
- There have been a number of good improvements in the curriculum since the previous inspection. Careers education and work experience are now in place. Guidance enables pupils to be challenged to reach their potential. For one pupil who may be preparing for independent living supported by social care agencies, yet for another preparing for the ultimate goal of university. The curriculum has been expanded, so that pupils now receive good planned programmes in physical education, music and French. This has a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- The relevant, balanced and broad curriculum enables pupils to choose subjects and therapies to help them progress. The curriculum is flexible: pupils have individual curriculum programmes to support them to achieve. Pupils receive good guidance about subjects to take and about the choices to make as part of well co-ordinated arrangements relating to the next places of their education and training. A wide range of lunchtime clubs, outdoor adventure activities, residential trips and educational visits enhance pupils' development of social skills, alongside promoting their enjoyment in learning.
- National Curriculum changes have been modified to meet the special educational needs of the pupils. For example, Key Stage 3 English texts have been made more accessible on laptops for higher achieving pupils to go through and work out the meanings of words. However, the sixth form curriculum has not been changed to include more accredited vocational subjects to better meet the needs of higher achieving pupils who will enter the sixth form next academic year.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils quietly reflect in the sensory garden, and were thoughtful as they focused on the end of the Second World War. Cultural diversity is promoted through enrichment weeks, when pupils learn about the customs, dress and foods of countries

like Latvia, Poland and Pakistan. Through anger management sessions pupils learn to control themselves by reducing any anger they have. They consider what they did wrong and understand the need to make amends.

- The school encourages pupils' awareness of the British values of tolerance and liberty. It sensitively enables pupils who find it difficult to work together to learn to engage as members of a team. Pupils learn about democracy through electing what clubs to join. Pupils are, therefore, prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good and meet all requirements. Senior leaders are trained in how to spot risky behaviours in pupils and they put in place a good range of risk assessments for pupils in vulnerable circumstances to keep them safe. Safeguarding procedures are suitably robust. All safeguarding training, including safe-recruitment training, is up to date.

#### ■ **The governance of the school:**

There is no governing body. The proprietors ensure that all statutory requirements are met, which includes all of the independent school standards. The management committee, which includes the proprietors (who prefer to be called directors) and a number of external professionals, holds senior leaders to account. They ask challenging questions about the behaviour and progress data in the curriculum committee, when they receive reports and presentations from senior leaders. Through the personnel committee the staff are monitored and held to account for their performance.

Parents receive all of the information required, and considerable attention is paid to ensure that pupils' welfare is fully safeguarded. Every risk assessment, like the fire risk assessment, has an action plan to address any deficiencies. These are addressed fully.

The accommodation is adequate and suitable, and appropriately sound-proofed. The management committee is supportive in helping develop new accommodation.

A business plan is in place to further develop expertise in working with pupils with autistic spectrum disorder.

The management committee has helped the school to develop a new system for tracking its budget and carefully monitors spending.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. When they start at this school, most pupils are anxious and understandably present very challenging behaviours. Teachers and therapists are skilled in helping pupils overcome their anxiety and, as they become less stressed, their behaviour improves.
- Some pupils are frustrated because they cannot communicate. As speech and language therapists help them to communicate, and they become proficient in their use of signs or symbols in lessons, their frustration dissipates and they behave better.
- Overall, pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Concentration in lessons is good because pupils are keen to succeed. On the few occasions when pupils wander off task in lessons, they are swiftly brought back and re-engaged with learning.
- The school is orderly and calm. There is no litter or graffiti. Property is respected; candles made by pupils in the workshop, as part of an enterprise project, are looked after.
- Pupils value the rewards for behaving well. They accept consequences when they misbehave. For some there is a deep understanding of the impact their misbehaviour has on others. Others learn to improve by understanding that if there is a rule, and if they do not keep to that rule, there will be consequences to their actions.
- Behavioural incidents significantly decrease the longer pupils are in this school.
- There are no racist incidents. No pupils are excluded.

- Attendance is above average, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Rigorous assessment of potentially risky behaviour is supported by highly personalised plans to ensure pupils' safety. When, occasionally, a pupil lashes out with frustration staff move quickly to appropriately hold the pupil. Consequently, that pupil is kept safe, as are other pupils there at the time. This is recorded meticulously and the pupil's behaviour plan is modified to help further improvement.
- Visitors to school are carefully checked before being allowed in. Trips out of school are checked against risk factors to ensure the safety of pupils.
- Premises are safe, staff are thoroughly risk assessed and the welfare, health and safety requirements are met. Measures are taken to ensure that pupils are not indoctrinated and that they experience a range of customs and cultures that are different, but equally valuable.
- Pupils confidently say that they feel safe at school. They have a trusted adult in school to go to share any concern. Bullying is rare. It is dealt with swiftly and the perpetrator receives counselling, as does the victim.
- Most pupils are aware of the hazards to be watchful for in the workforce. Pupils who use computers and digital devices understand how to keep themselves safe.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- The impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time is good. Throughout the school, the teaching of English, mathematics and science is good.
- Typically, teaching successfully develops pupils' life skills and promotes their academic achievement. It is highly personalised, often one-to-one teaching. This enables the student working towards AS examinations to succeed alongside the pupil with severe learning difficulties to be prepared for the next step of development.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They plan flexibly, taking into account their understanding of the wide range of special educational needs, anxieties and emotional difficulties of pupils within their classes. This knowledge and understanding is used effectively to accelerate pupils' learning, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- There is a strong emphasis on improving pupils' literacy skills. Speech and language therapists help those pupils who need it, to communicate, using signs and pictures. However, more able pupils are extended in their speaking and reading. All are taught writing. Some are taught how to craft extended pieces of writing. All literacy support is personalised. Pupils struggling with the meaning of a text are helped to grasp the meaning of words. For example, starting with a pupils' interest in football they are brought around to grasp the meaning of the word score in their 'Treasure Island' text. Numeracy is promoted in science, geography and other subjects. Some pupils with severe learning difficulties learn to weigh and measure in their cooking lessons.
- Teaching takes careful account of pupils' anxiety by capitalising on their interests and the best ways they learn. This may mean using their favoured approach to solving a complex mathematical problem which is not the expected method others may use. Teachers always use pupils' preferred and sometimes unique ways of communicating to ensure they are fully involved and understand what they are doing.
- Questioning is good. Teachers ask questions skilfully so that they reduce anxiety and develop pupils' ideas. They ask questions about what pupils are doing when they tackle a problem in mathematics and science lessons. They then use pupils' responses to deepen pupils' understanding, and sometimes take them onto new learning.

- Mostly, key workers (teaching assistants) make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. However, occasionally they do not. There is a little inconsistency because in a few lessons they do not contribute sufficiently to pupils' learning.
- Most teachers make use of their assessments of what pupils know and can do to provide new and challenging work to accelerate pupils' learning. This is not always consistently the case. Sometimes, the work is too easy for some pupils.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. Attainment is different for each pupil, reflecting their wide range of needs. One may get an A\* grade at GCSE in mathematics, another a transitional challenge award (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network). There is a similar picture in English, but the lower attainment for the most-able pupils in this subject reflects their communication difficulties relating to their autistic spectrum disorder. However, for each pupil this shows good progress from their starting points.
- For motivation, if ready, most-able pupils are entered for GCSE early. This impacts positively. For example, pupils gaining A\* grade GCSE passes in mathematics, chemistry and physics in Year 10, successfully work at the higher AS Level in these subjects in Year 11. Similarly, the most-able pupils who get a D pass at GCSE in English in Year 10 then thirst to get a grade C pass in this subject in Year 11.
- Different groups of pupils make good progress. Pupils with severe learning difficulties, in addition to their autistic spectrum disorder, make good progress. For example, those starting out in school not being able to read, increasingly use symbols to read. Through subjects, such as food technology, they make good mathematical and writing gains as they weigh the ingredients needed for cooking and write shopping lists.
- There are too few girls and minority ethnic pupils to make specific achievement judgements about them. However, they do equally as well as their peers.
- A strength of the school is the achievements for individual pupils because of intensive support and tailored provision (the school calls this the 'bespoke curriculum' in its documentation). For example, a pupil with an interest in animals was given work experience on a farm and is now about to move to a Level 1 course (equivalent to a D to G grade at GCSE) at college to pursue this interest.
- Achievements in communication and movement (balance) for some pupils are good. This is because of the positive impact of the work of speech and occupational therapists.

### The sixth form provision

is good

- There are very few students (three students). These students have complex special educational needs. A few have sensory impairment and will be moving to a specialist college soon; others are being prepared for independent living, post school. The leadership and management of the sixth form (shared by three members of staff) are good, because the provision and guidance and advice prepare these students well for their next stage of education and life.
- Students make good progress from very low starting points. Students learn how to cook, use the washing machine and clean their classroom. Functional literacy and numeracy skills are developed well in the classroom where students begin to read symbols to support them with life skills and gain numeracy skills required to cope with everyday tasks. They also go out in the community and learn about money as they shop and take on responsibility for jobs such as picking up litter in the park.
- Students' behaviour and safety are managed effectively. Staff know students well, including their medical needs, and avoid situations that may trigger anxiety. Students' welfare is high priority. Mostly, the behaviour of these students is good.

- Teaching is good. It is typified by developing students' life skills. For example, the teaching of reading focuses on enabling students to recognise the sign for a toilet or for a fire exit. Every opportunity is provided through teaching to develop students' practical mathematical skills, like practising weighing and measuring ingredients for cooking. These skills contribute towards their functional skills accreditation at their level of capability.
  
- The most-able students transfer to college at the end of Year 12. However, there are now other higher achieving students coming up through the school (not the most-able who transfer to college at the end of Year 12), who will enter the sixth form in September 2015. There are not, as yet, accredited vocational subjects on offer for them to extend their achievement, enhance their employability skills and so get them ready for college.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the GOV.UK website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134893
<b>Inspection number</b>	462927
<b>DfE registration number</b>	874/6035

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School status</b>	Special school for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	6–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Male
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	21
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	3
<b>Proprietor</b>	Alan and Jane Crossland
<b>Chair of Management Committee</b>	Graham Pocock
<b>Principal</b>	Jane Crossland
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 January 2012
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£51,503 to £64,083
<b>Telephone number</b>	01733 271187
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