

Parrenthorn High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105358
Local Authority	Bury
Inspection number	324209
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Johnson 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	791
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Wilf Davison
Headteacher	Mr Michael Fitzgerald
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2005
School address	Heywood Road Prestwich Manchester M25 2GR
Telephone number	0161 773 8634
Fax number	0161 798 7048

Age group	11–16
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2008
Inspection number	324209

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Parrenthorn High School serves the communities of Prestwich, Whitefield and other areas around the northern edge of Manchester. The school has a smaller than average number of students but numbers are growing due to its popularity with parents. Considerable redevelopment of buildings has taken place since the previous inspection and is continuing until next year. There is a diversity of minority ethnic groups in the school, although the overall percentage is slightly less than the national average, as is the proportion of students whose first language is not English. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is slightly below average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The school holds specialist technology college status and has achieved the Sportsmark and Healthy Schools awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Parrenthorn High School is outstanding because students make excellent progress and reach exceptionally high standards. Staff share a common goal to make sure all students are given the best possible chance to succeed. Members of the senior team take a high-profile, hands-on approach to management. As a result, significant improvements have been made to all aspects of the school's work since the last inspection.

Students' progress is measured rigorously, evidence of underachievement is identified quickly and effective support is provided. Teachers and support workers are appointed with great care; they are considered to be the most important resource the school has and are very well supported. Despite the considerable building work that has taken place in the last year, there are no signs that this has had a detrimental impact on students' experiences. There are high expectations of staff and students. As a result, much of what is seen as the norm in this school is outstanding.

Students try hard in lessons and are keen to succeed. They recognise how good the school is and were keen to tell inspectors about its strengths. Most lessons are good and many are outstanding. In all the lessons inspectors observed, students gained a greater understanding of subjects and made significant progress. In the best lessons they develop a real passion for learning and teachers use methods that promote high levels of enjoyment. Teachers challenge students by setting ambitious targets and check understanding by frequent and searching questioning. However, in a significant minority of cases the marking of students' exercise books is not of a consistently high standard and as a result students do not get sufficient guidance about what they need to do to improve.

Pastoral support for students is outstanding. Students get off to an excellent start in Year 7 due to the well planned transition arrangements and develop confidence quickly. The school is an inclusive and welcoming community and has effective policies and procedures to ensure that this culture is maintained. As a result, all groups of students attain standards that are well above the national average. For example, 100% of Year 11 students who took GCSE examinations obtained five or more passes. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve very well due to the excellent support they receive. Vulnerable groups, such as children in the care of the local authority, achieve very high success rates when compared with the national picture because the school rightly focuses on ensuring that they do not lose out in school. Gifted and talented students achieve very high proportions of A* and A grades at GCSE in a wide range of subjects. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve very well.

Bullying and incidents of racial harassment are very rare, but when they do happen, they are dealt with swiftly and fairly. Good discipline is seen as a priority and the zero-tolerance approach to poor behaviour has had a significant effect on promoting good behaviour. The school is developing its support for students who find it difficult to behave well by setting up a well resourced inclusion centre in the new building. Students enjoy coming to school and parents are very positive about the education and care their children receive. Attendance is above the national average.

The curriculum and other activities are excellent because they meet the needs of all students. There are many and varied extra-curricular activities and participation rates are very high. The school holds specialist technology college status and this has enabled it to provide high quality resources to promote excellent standards in technology, mathematics and science. Most senior

managers make accurate judgements about the quality of lessons, and provide useful advice to teachers. However, the criteria used by observers are not always consistent and this sometimes leads to a little inconsistency. The self-evaluation process is particularly rigorous and accurate in measuring achievement and standards, and teaching and learning. Data is used particularly well. However, some additional criteria should be developed to ensure that the high quality of curriculum and support is measured and maintained. Governors are very effective in their role as critical friend and the school represents excellent value for money. The school has an outstanding capacity to sustain its excellent standards and deliver its ambitious plans for the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the consistency and usefulness of marking, so that students know exactly what they need to do to improve in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

From broadly average starting points students make outstanding progress and attain high standards in all years. The school has taken very effective action since the last inspection to raise standards and improve progress. Performance in English, mathematics and science has improved very significantly and is outstanding. GCSE examination pass rates are well above the national average in almost all subjects and provisional results indicate further improvement in 2008. Girls leave the school with levels of attainment that are higher than boys which mirrors the national picture; however, boys make better progress considering their starting points. Students who are eligible for free school meals make excellent progress and leave the school with levels of attainment well above the national average, although they still lag behind their peers. The relatively small numbers of pupils who take vocational courses make good progress and achieve well due to the school's effective partnerships with colleges, training providers and employers. Students get off to a very good start in Key Stage 3 and accelerate even more in Key Stage 4. Most leave the school with the best possible preparation for further education or training. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress as is illustrated by the achievement of personal targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Mature and sensible relationships among students and between students and adults illustrate the high level of personal development. The importance of regular attendance is well understood and the school works hard to maintain its high level of attendance and reduce the small proportion of students who are persistently absent.

Students' behaviour is excellent. It is clear from lessons and discussions with students that they particularly enjoy opportunities to learn independently and this is enhanced by a wide range of clubs at lunchtime and after school. Students are well equipped to ensure their future economic well-being: they have high level skills in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT). Active involvement with the local community and charities greatly benefits students and they develop a good understanding of citizenship. The school council is successfully run by students and has a real impact on the development of the school. The use of older students as peer supporters to younger ones is much appreciated and contributes well to the happy and secure atmosphere.

Students exuded confidence when they spoke to inspectors and their independence and self-esteem shone through, displaying a greater maturity than would be expected for their age. They have excellent attitudes towards healthy living, and take part in the wide range of sporting activities. They have very strong views about issues such as smoking, and a good awareness of safety matters such as the use of the Internet. A healthy range of food is provided, although students sometimes choose other options.

The ethos of the school is underpinned by its provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is demonstrated in practice by the exemplary way in which students show care and consideration for each other and an understanding of the various religious festivals that are celebrated in the school. Local community cohesion is promoted well and the school has recently set up links with schools in China and Holland in an effort to develop an international dimension. The views of parents are typified by one parent who said: 'I feel my children are very lucky to attend the school. Not only do they receive excellent academic support but their pastoral and emotional needs are well met.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Inspectors agreed with the school that the quality of teaching and learning is good with a significant number of outstanding lessons and almost no inadequate teaching. Students say that most lessons are usually enjoyable but some lack variety. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of media and ICT to promote learning. For example, in a geography lesson on migration, students watched a short video clip contrasting ways of life and listened to music. They then wrote imaginary letters home. In a history lesson on the Spanish armada, students listened to music and took part in role plays to stimulate their imagination and develop an understanding and empathy for the period. They were then asked to compose text messages to summarise their learning. Students' exercise books show that marking is inconsistent as is the use of planners. Where it is not frequent or rigorous enough students do not get enough written advice on what exactly it is they have to do to improve. The school's specialism in technology has promoted good use of high quality teaching resources. In most subjects the increasing use of ICT as an aid to teaching is having a positive effect on learning. Teaching assistants provide good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These students make the best progress when teachers and support workers spend time together planning lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because it has been well tailored to meet students' needs and aspirations. There are many visits within the UK and abroad that promote cultural understanding and cross-curricular links. Most students study two languages successfully during Key Stage 3. This year the school sensibly prioritised additional literacy support for a group of students in Year 7. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum is broad and offers a balanced choice of GCSE courses. In keeping with the school's specialist status, all students are expected to study a course in design and technology. The school offers a personalised curriculum for a minority of students, including those who are not suited to the more academic curriculum or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This is successfully achieved through the wide range of partnerships between the school, local college, independent training providers and local employers. Students are fully

prepared for their lives beyond this school through the work-related skills, economic awareness, personal, social and health education and citizenship courses provided. Ensuring the development of students' personal learning and thinking skills is at an early stage of development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Students receive outstanding care, guidance and support when they start the school and this is maintained throughout their school career. They speak very positively about the efforts made to ensure a smooth transition from their primary school. The residential visit to Wales, that most of them attend, is very valuable in ensuring that new students build confidence. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are securely in place and follow current government guidelines. Last year a small number of students were permanently excluded from school and several were excluded for fixed periods of time. The students who were excluded for fixed periods and returned to school are well supported and maintain good levels of progress. Academic progress is closely monitored and targets are set at the beginning of each year for each student in every subject. Gifted and talented students are set challenging targets. The department leaders and heads of year monitor students' progress and intervene where necessary to make improvements. There is particularly good support available for students who are new to the UK and this develops their use of English. Views of parents are actively sought and the vast majority are positive about the school, however, a few responded to inspectors by saying that the school could do more in response to specific support issues for their children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding as is demonstrated by the impact on the performance of the school. The headteacher ensures that staff are focused on raising standards, achievement and the quality of behaviour. He also ensures that he is not diverted from key tasks by other more peripheral issues. This is reflected in the school development plan and robust target setting. Members of the senior leadership team ably support the headteacher in driving the school forward and the leadership of subjects and year groups is excellent. This is a very inclusive and harmonious school where links with the community are very strong. Particularly good partnerships have been built with local primary schools and local colleges to ensure excellent transition arrangements for students. Members of the senior leadership team and governors have a clear idea of strengths and areas for improvement. However, the criteria they use to evaluate the effectiveness of support and the curriculum are not always as useful as they should be. Governors are very supportive and clearly able to hold the school to account. All the relevant policies and procedures are in place, for example with regard to equality of opportunity and disability, and are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are having a positive impact.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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
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	1

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

Inspection of Parrenthorn High School, Prestwich, M25 2GR

Thank you for the warm welcome and the help you gave us when we inspected your school recently. Please pass on our thanks to your parents and carers for the questionnaires they returned and tell them we took their views into account.

It was a pleasure to talk to you about your learning and the support you are given. We agree with you that Parrenthorn is an outstanding school. We were very impressed by your excellent achievements and your attitudes to learning.

Here are some of the things that make your school stand out from others.

- You reach very high standards and make exceptionally good progress.
- Your teachers work very hard to make sure your lessons are valuable. Despite the disruption the building work has caused, they continue to provide a very high standard of education. We did feel that some books could be marked more frequently and the advice you are given in your planners and exercise books could be better in a few cases.
- The care, guidance and support you receive are excellent. Staff make you feel safe and secure, especially when you move from primary school.
- Bullying incidents are very rare and when they do happen are sorted out quickly and fairly. The school council and peer mentors are particularly good at helping students who are feeling unhappy.
- You have excellent personal and social skills. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. You know how to lead healthy lives and have a good understanding of your responsibilities as part of a diverse community. You are very well prepared for the future and the school helps you to become confident and caring young people.
- The curriculum and the extra-curricular activities are excellent. It was good to see how many of you participate in sporting and other activities outside normal school time.
- Leadership and management of the school are tremendous. There is a very sharp focus on what is important and, if necessary, changes are brought about quickly and effectively.

I know that you and your parents are proud of your school and you have every right to be so!