Inspection of The Park Community School

Park Lane, Barnstaple, Devon EX32 9AX

Inspection dates:	3 and 4 June 2025
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Vicky Owen. This school is part of The Harbour Schools Partnership multi-academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Gary Chown, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sean Mackney.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Park Community School is improving rapidly. Pupils respond well to the school's high expectations of them. Typically, lessons proceed without disruption and pupils move around the school grounds in an orderly and respectful way. Pupils welcome the improvements to school culture that they have seen. For example, they understand and reflect the school values, known as the 'Park Pillars', of participation, aspiration, responsibility and kindness.

The school prides itself on being a place where everyone is welcome and can be successful. Pupils engage well with their learning and achieve well. The school makes a real difference to the attendance, behaviour and achievement of pupils, including those who have struggled with these things in the past. The school has developed its provision for the pastoral care of pupils so that there is always a member of staff available who can offer support.

Extra-curricular activities are often linked to the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. These give pupils experience of volunteering and help them to develop resilience in preparation for adulthood. The school takes a strong stance on bullying and prejudice. Pupils play a key role in asserting a positive and tolerant school culture. For example, a large group of pupils have trained to be mentors in the prevention of violence and bullying.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils follow a broad and ambitious curriculum. Attainment is above the national average, however, there are a few subjects in which pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This often affects disadvantaged pupils. The school is working effectively to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching. It is too soon for the impact of this to be fully reflected in the school's published outcomes.

With the support of the trust, the school has put in place approaches to check pupils' understanding across the curriculum. This helps staff to ensure that teaching builds on what pupils have learned previously. However, there are some inconsistencies in how well these approaches are used. This sometimes affects how well pupils build their knowledge in different subjects.

Pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified clearly. The school has implemented teaching approaches designed to give pupils with SEND the best chance of success. This provides wide benefits for pupils with SEND as well as others. Nevertheless, there are some inconsistencies in how well teaching approaches consider individual needs and pupils' different starting points.

Pupils who join the school in Years 7 to 9 having fallen behind in reading, receive focused teaching which helps them to catch up. Wider reading, for example, of age-appropriate

fiction, is promoted well in these year groups. These arrangements are less well developed for pupils in key stage 4.

Pupils' attitudes towards their education are improving rapidly. Leaders have clarified the school's ethos, placing relationships at the heart of its work. This, coupled with strong systems, has created the conditions for sustainable improvement. The school sets pupils on the path to better attendance, punctuality and behaviour. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from these changes although persistent absence remains too high for this group.

The school provides a well-structured programme of learning to support pupils' wider development. Pupils cover an appropriate range of topics to prepare them for the challenges of adult life, including the world of work and healthy relationships. Pupils' learning across curriculum subjects, through assemblies and in the breadth of the enrichment opportunities they access, enhances their moral and cultural development. Careers education is comprehensive and includes a focus on raising aspiration among disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders at all levels are united in their ambitious vision for pupils and the school. Recent organisational changes at the trust level, have been navigated skilfully, ensuring that the support and effective governance of the school has not been interrupted. Staff morale is high. They recognise the improvements so far and welcome the new strategic direction.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There remains some inconsistency in the quality of teaching that pupils receive. In a few subjects, pupils' understanding is not checked effectively. On occasion, teaching is not adjusted as well as it could be to meet their needs. Where this is the case, the school should ensure that the curriculum and its teaching approaches are implemented consistently well so that pupils build knowledge securely.
- Although there is an improving trend, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains too low. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is reduced over time because too often these pupils are persistently absent from school. The school should ensure that disadvantaged pupils attend regularly and that any gaps in their learning are addressed effectively.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use Ofsted Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further guidance on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	146094
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10378963
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1418
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sean Mackney
CEO of the trust	Gary Chown
Headteacher	Vicky Owen
Website	www.theparkschool.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	24 and 25 January 2023, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2023.
- The school joined the Harbour Schools Partnership multi-academy trust in April 2025, following a merger of the Tarka Learning Partnership and Ventrus multi-academy trust.
- The school uses two registered and seven unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form

provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the chair, vice chair and one other member of the board of trustees, the school improvement advisor from the multi-academy trust and the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, art and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons in a range of other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jan Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector
Leanne Mills	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Barnes	Ofsted Inspector
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