

Park High School

Information for applicants

We promote high achievement in a learning community.

We provide a stimulating and caring environment so that all members of the school can grow in knowledge, skills, understanding and character and achieve to the best of their ability.

We have a strong sense of purpose. We encourage our students to be enthusiastic about learning and positive about the future; to have high self-esteem and be confident and successful in what they do; to have understanding and respect for others; to have the ability and desire to further their own development and contribute to the society in which we live.

We believe in equality of opportunity and in celebrating success of all kinds.

These are our school principles.

Park High School is a 11-18 co-educational and multi-ethnic comprehensive school which became an academy on 31 August 2011. We are ambitious for our students and staff and, as a result, the school has shown continuous year-on-year improvement. In the 2001 report of the Chief Inspector for Schools we were mentioned as a particularly successful school with an outstanding inspection report and excellent performance in both national tests and public examinations. We became a Beacon School in September 2001 and a Technology College in September 2002. In July 2003 we became one of the first Leading Edge Schools. In January 2005 we achieved Healthy School status which was re-awarded in 2009. Our 2006 Ofsted inspection report described us as a 'very effective school' and in both our January 2009 inspection, and in May 2013, the school was judged to be outstanding.

Our roll is now just under 1600 and the school is one of the most heavily oversubscribed in Harrow. The vast majority of our students live very close to the school. There are close to 120 teachers and almost 70 support staff. Our Sixth Form opened in September 2007 and Harrow LA introduced Year 7 to all its secondary community schools in 2010, accompanied by some new buildings.

Student achievement at the school is high across a wide range of measurable outcomes. A variety of data show that we are consistently good at 'adding value', including post-16, and the drive for higher standards is built into the work of the school. Staying on rates into tertiary education are high, amongst the highest in the country. There is substantial involvement and success in both artistic and sporting activity. Our students are encouraged to take on considerable responsibility and consequently are frequently commented upon as mature and purposeful.

A particularly important focus for us is that of learning to learn, developing more effective habits of mind. Our aim is to build successfully on the research about how young people learn and to build this into our teaching. There has been significant professional development in this area, and the response from staff and students has been very positive. This is a long term project, with the aim being that our students and staff know as much about how young people learn as those in any school, anywhere. A visiting HMI at the school commented that our students are able to articulate their learning at an unexpectedly high level of sophistication.

Our curriculum is significantly extended by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. So much so that inspection teams always comment upon it as the best they have seen. This provision contributes in a large way to students' positive attitudes and a high level of self-esteem. In July 2013 we were awarded Artsmark Gold at our first application.

Students' progress is monitored through regular progress checks, the outcomes of which are considered in department and year team meetings. It is also supported both by a well-structured pastoral system and a core PSHCEE programme. Most teaching staff are tutors in teams led by five heads of year. They move up with their year groups. Heads of Year are supported by non-teaching, expert Student Support Coordinators, who build and maintain excellent relationships with staff, students and families. The role of the tutor is central in supporting students' achievement. In all years we have a system of regular individual reviews by tutors.

As a school we emphasise praise and rewards and have fairly elaborate systems of merits and certificates which are much appreciated by students. We also put considerable emphasis on contact with home, and operate a time-efficient but effective termly 'alert' system as part of our progress checks. Achievement is valued in all areas of activity, not just examination results, and this is reflected in students' Park High Portfolios.

We expect high standards of behaviour and courtesy at all times and put effort into following up any misbehaviour. We believe that consistency among staff is important so that students are clear about our expectations. That way, we hope to create the kind of environment which supports effective learning for all students. The school has excellent relationships and, without exception, visitors to Park High comment on the courtesy shown by our students.

Our Sixth Form opened in September 2007 with 15 AS subjects, which has now increased to 23 and our Sixth Form, of some 200 students, feels like it is the right size and we have no further plans for expansion. Our ALPS grades are always good and place us comfortably in the top 10% of Sixth Forms in the country in terms of effectiveness. Our Sixth Form is part of the Harrow Collegiate, which is a ground-breaking approach to developing post-16 education for all 16 to 19 year olds through a well co-ordinated breadth of provision in schools, colleges, our skills centre and employment with training.

High quality leadership and management is a school priority and we have invested considerable time in developing expertise and clarity of roles. Strong leadership exists at all levels: for example, among subject leaders, heads of year and in our support staff. Good communication is a priority and this happens both formally and informally. We do not rely exclusively on emails and we talk to each other regularly, including in our staffroom which is well used! Good communication is a responsibility for all staff and it is our policy to involve as many staff as possible in planning and management decisions. We have a detailed staff handbook which is a working document, reviewed annually. We are doing significant work on coaching, for both staff and students. A number of staff have been trained and we intend that all staff have the opportunity to develop coaching skills. A recent initiative is the establishment of a Coaching Faculty, available confidentially to all staff.

We have a strong governing body which is described by Ofsted as 'outstanding'. Governors work alongside staff to understand key issues and to establish policy, and through their committee structure have oversight of the school and hold us accountable. Governors agree and review our strategic plan and discuss an extensive series of 'review & planning' papers.

Our strategic priorities guide all our work and especially our professional development, our commitment to which is exceptionally strong. We have strong working strategic partnerships with NAACE, SSAT, NTEN and the Teacher Development Trust. The induction of all new staff is a priority and newly qualified staff have their own extensive programme overseen by senior staff.

The idea of partnership is central to all our thinking at Park. The school moves forward on consensus and has the confidence both of students and parents. We value good relationships between all members of the school community as the basic requirement for effective teaching and learning. Our partnership with our neighbouring primary schools and with all of the other high schools in Harrow is particularly strong: schools collaborate rather than compete and we are always seeking to refine and develop our own very best practices through our active participation in networks of common interest both inside the school and beyond it.

Increasingly Park High is achieving recognition at national and regional levels. National research into areas of excellence in which we are currently involved includes the exceptionally high number of students who continue to study mathematics to A level (about 70% of our A level students) and the high quality of personal development at the school. We are very much a 'learning school' and want to appoint staff who are committed to their own professional development.

In summary, Park High is a very purposeful school, ambitious for both its students and staff and with a clear sense of direction. The emphasis is very much on the positive. We pay considerable attention to the school as a community, for staff as much as for students, and one indicator of this is the large number of informal staff "get-togethers", including walking trips at weekends. Another indicator is the low turnover of staff and an increasing number who return for a second teaching post at the school!

The school is located in Stanmore, a largely residential area in the outer London Borough of Harrow. There are good transport links: we are within easy reach of the M1, A5 (Edgware Road), A41 and North Circular Road; public transport links include the Jubilee Line (Underground), buses in nearby Honeypot and Whitchurch Lanes, and the fast rail service through Harrow and Wealdstone.

Further information about the school and a fuller 'flavour' can be obtained from our website:

www.parkhighstanmore.org.uk

Mrs C O'Dwyer
Headteacher