

Parkside Community College

Parkside, Cambridge, CB1 1EH

Inspection dates

20–21 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The large majority of teaching is good throughout the school. Some teaching and learning are outstanding.
- Although there was a marked dip in 2012, standards by Year 11 are usually above average; achievement overall is good.
- Good leadership from the principal, other leaders and governors reflect the school's drive to regain its record for excellence.
- Individually and corporately, members of the governing body have developed close links with the school which benefits well from their personal and professional expertise.
- Students point to the trust they have in their teachers as a strength of the school.
- The school has established a good sixth form.
- A balance of International Baccalaureate and vocational courses are meeting the needs of sixth form students well.
- Opportunities for discussion and debate are particularly good in the sixth form.
- There are often good opportunities in lessons throughout the school for students to reflect on spiritual, moral, social and cultural values, and to develop their critical and analytical skills.
- Students' attitudes to learning are good; behaviour around school is civilized.
- Students cooperate well together and know how to keep each other safe while at school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of outstanding teaching is not yet high enough; there remains some teaching which requires improvement. This includes ensuring consistently regular and high quality marking and lesson planning.
- Work in lessons is not always planned specifically enough to meet the needs of individuals or some groups of students.
- Improvements in mathematics have yet to be consolidated in order that students may achieve as well as in English.
- There are weaknesses in the school's administration systems which mean leaders and governors do not always have sufficiently robust information to help in their checking of the school's work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 28 lessons including six which were observed jointly with members of the school’s leadership team. 30 teachers were seen working with the students, including where more than one teacher was working with a class or group. Students were also observed taking a house assembly.
- Meetings were held with various groups of students selected at random by the lead inspector. These included students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. In addition, many informal opportunities were taken to talk with students.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, various monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, governing body documents, and information for families.
- Discussions were held with the executive principal, other members of the senior leadership team, faculty directors, class teachers, teaching assistants, the academy’s special educational needs coordinator, administrative staff and members of the governing body. Conversations were held with the school’s consultant improvement advisor.
- The inspectors took into consideration the 104 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The 66 responses to the questionnaire for school staff were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Michael Miller, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kathleen Yates

Additional Inspector

Frances Le Pla

Additional Inspector

Karen Kerridge

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school converted to become an academy in April 2011, following the closure of its predecessor school, and has retained the same name. When a local authority school, Parkside Community College was previously inspected on 1 October 2008 and judged to be outstanding.
- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school serving families mainly from the City of Cambridge area. In September 2011 it expanded its provision to include a sixth form.
- Some sixth form students attend part-time at Parkside and at 'The Junction' theatre, taking a vocational arts course. Some students in Key Stage 4 undertake a construction course, for one afternoon a week, at Cambridge Regional College. A few students on the school's roll receive alternative provision (are taught full-time elsewhere) at The County School, a pupil referral unit.
- The large majority of students come from White ethnic heritage backgrounds. A few come from mixed and Asian or Asian British backgrounds; a very few from various other ethnic backgrounds. The percentage known to speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for particular groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching across the school, and improve the quality of students' learning, by:
 - planning lessons to take more account of lower and middle attaining students, and those who find learning more difficult or who experience barriers to their progress
 - ensuring consistently regular and high quality marking across all subjects
 - monitoring students' work more thoroughly to ensure they pay more attention to the standard of presentation of their work.
- Ensure the students' improving progress in mathematics is maintained across all year groups by:
 - establishing from Year 7 a programme in numeracy to complement the successful programme already in place for literacy support
 - extending ways for students to use their mathematics skills in 'real-life' situations.
- Improve the leadership and governance of the school, and its quality assurance procedures, by:
 - reviewing the work of the school's administration systems to ensure that the information provided for the governing body and senior leaders is sufficiently robust and up-to-date
 - monitoring more closely the students' actual progress, and analysing more regularly the impact of the school's programmes to support those who find learning more difficult
 - strengthening the ways the school's leaders monitor the impact of lesson planning and initiatives to improve students' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- School data and inspection evidence show that students, including those who need extra help with their learning, those who are disabled or have special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, are making good progress against challenging school targets. The progress of the few known to be eligible for free school meals is improving. However, this was not the case during 2011-12, when achievement dipped significantly.
- Attainment on entry to Year 7 has, typically, been average. Attainment at the end of Year 11 has been above average. This has represented good, and often better, achievement. In summer 2012 attainment in GCSE and equivalent examinations fell to average. Consequently, between Years 7 and 11, students only made nationally expected progress overall; their achievement required improvement.
- The majority of students took combinations of subjects which qualified for the English Baccalaureate. Attainment was average in English, mathematics, science and languages. However, it was above average in humanities, which reflects the school's approach and expertise in teaching the International Baccalaureate.
- In English, the students' average points score (the measure by which all students are assessed nationally at the end of each stage of their education) was above average overall. However, while attainment was above average in English language it was average in English literature. Students taking English at GCSE achieved less well in these subjects than others taken at the same time. In mathematics, attainment and progress were average.
- Progress in English, from Years 7 to 11, was as expected nationally for students who had gained average or higher standards at the end of Year 6. However, progress was below that expected for other students. In mathematics, progress was as expected for those whose attainment had been high at the end of Year 6, but below that expected nationally for all others.
- In 2012, the point score gap in achievement between all students and those for whom the school received additional government funding did not close as quickly as seen nationally. It narrowed in English but widened in mathematics. Funding has been used for one-to-one support in English; the school is now to extend this further for mathematics. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs attained below similar students nationally in both English and mathematics. Their overall progress was less than that seen nationally.
- The school's explanation for all this relates to poor decisions taken about the courses, examination boards and chosen entry levels, particularly in mathematics. This has now been resolved. Most current Year 11 students were entered early for the GCSE mathematics examination in November 2012; results returned to well above average. However, the school has still to re-build its track record through enabling its students to achieve success across their full range of subjects in the 2013 examinations.
- In a Year 11 English lesson students made outstanding progress in their preparation for their speaking assessments. Discussion with the students showed they understood well the purpose of the work. Previous learning had prepared them extremely well for the task. Excellent discussions enabled them to explore, in considerable depth, the nature of the characters they had been allocated. This was a very positive experience, building confidence for all involved, including those who speak English as a second language.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers are usually skilled at getting the best out of their students, and little or no time is wasted in lessons. There is good encouragement of and involvement with the students. This keeps the students 'on their toes', on task, interested and stimulated to think and try their best.
- Teachers promote well the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Creativity is encouraged, such as that seen in a Year 10 dance lesson involving the dynamics of movement. Most students made good progress in the development of dance sequences which flowed thoughtfully and gracefully. Such experiences are reflected in the students' imaginative work, including through problem solving and when exploring alternative solutions. Such teaching encourages balance in the students' thinking and self-assurance.
- Marking is mostly regular but some books were seen which had not been marked for three months. Students comment on the variability of some marking; written comments explaining exactly what to do to improve are sometimes too infrequent. Nevertheless, teachers talk with students regularly to help them improve their work; this is appreciated by the students. Some teachers' expectations of a sufficiently high quality of presentation are inconsistent; an emphasis on this important workplace skill is neglected.
- Lesson planning is not currently sharp enough to ensure the needs of individual students are met fully. The school's drive to improve standards has led to a greater focus on higher attaining students. This explains why some lower and middle attaining students have not achieved so well in the recent past. Where the learning seen required improvement, this weakness in ensuring work was suitable for every student's needs was a common denominator.
- Nevertheless, successful developments are to be seen in the teaching of literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 3. From Year 7, a focus on the teaching of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is providing a valuable bridge with teaching in the primary phase. This is helping students access any subject-specialist vocabulary with greater confidence. The school is planning to extend this approach to numeracy. The mathematics department is looking to make learning more enjoyable and relevant through extending opportunities for students to practise their numeracy skills in increasingly relevant and 'real life' situations.
- Teaching in the sixth form is particularly effective. In a Year 13 French lesson, excellent teaching ensured students made outstanding progress when considering the potential for 'unpredictable' questions in an oral examination. There were high levels of challenge for students of all abilities. This was planned for explicitly and led to intensive student interaction, involvement and engagement. Students accepted readily homework aimed at reinforcing and extending their learning; the teacher was clearly looking forward to receiving their completed work.
- The school works very effectively with its education partners. Teaching and learning are enhanced by the school's alternative provision, including through the Year 10 construction course and the sixth form theatre arts course. In construction, students benefit significantly from specialist teaching concerning, for example, modern and environmentally friendly timber buildings. In the working theatre, the students and their teacher have excellent opportunity to achieve alongside professionals, broadening perspectives on the arts and inspiring practice.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most parents and carers responding to the Parent View questionnaire agree that students are

well-behaved, happy and feel safe at school. The school nurtures positive values which ensure students behave well, attend regularly, are punctual to lessons and show well-cultivated manners. Behaviour which may disrupt learning is minimal. Where this occurs it is usually related to weaker teaching, and some exasperation on the part of those students who are involved insufficiently in the learning.

- Students know how to keep each other safe. The school's risk assessments help students to deal with a variety of situations when walking or cycling to the school's various sites, and when using Parker's Piece for sports. This was seen in practice during an excellent Year 8 physical education session. The students showed a highly mature approach to keeping safe in public.
- Students show a good awareness of the implications, dangers and consequences of the different types of bullying. Nevertheless, there are a few instances of bullying about which parents, staff and students expressed some concern. However, the students said such cases were dealt with effectively by the school, and that this was one of the reasons they had trust in the staff.
- Students take on readily any roles of responsibility and take pride in their roles as student leaders. They often come up with excellent ideas such as in the Year 8 physical education lesson where one girl used her personal experience to add extra challenge for her group when developing football control skills.

The leadership and management are good

- The decline to average attainment in the 2012 Year 11 examinations came as a shock. Loss of its track record for enabling most students to make at least good progress proved a salutary lesson. Responses to Parent View reflect the questions now being asked of the school's leadership by parents and carers. Responses to their questionnaire show that staff now have higher expectations of the school as well as themselves.
- The principal, other leaders and governors accept that mistakes were made. There are good and sometimes excellent systems in place for checking on the school's work, but these have not always been applied consistently. Sufficiently searching questions have not always been asked by senior leaders and governors.
- There has been an over-reliance on data and information provided by the school's administration. This has not always proved to be sufficiently robust or up-to-date. Given its past record for excellence, this has led to the leadership's over-estimation of the school's effectiveness. This has ranged from assumptions about record keeping to the appraisal of students' actual progress.
- The monitoring of teaching is very regular; a challenging approach to appraising its quality has been introduced by the governing body. In all joint lesson observations, inspectors agreed with each senior leader's judgements. However, there has been an over-emphasis on monitoring the quality of teaching rather than that of learning. During the forthcoming 'Red Nose' week, some students have volunteered to work with staff to become 'teachers' for a day. Those staff involved are becoming 'students' and discussions show they are relishing the opportunity to find out what it is really like to learn alongside their students.
- The school has established an excellent system for tracking students' progress against whole school targets. In this respect, the school is rich in data. Faculty directors are held to account for this weekly; potential underachievement can be identified quickly. However, the system is not as helpful in providing information about the actual rate of students' progress either term-by-term or year-by-year. The school is determined that the situation which led to Year 11 in 2012 making no better than expected progress will not reoccur. This is being resolved and prompt action

taken, as shown by the improved mathematics results already achieved by the current Year 11.

- The school has considered carefully its development of what is taught and the courses it offers. There is an imaginative approach involving traditional courses, the International Middle Years Curriculum in Key Stage 3, and the International Baccalaureate in the sixth form. The leadership and direction of the sixth form are proving increasingly successful. However, while most staff have embraced the changes, some have found it more difficult to adapt. There is scope for further support, through professional development, particularly to aid lesson planning.
- As an academy, the school employs its own school improvement consultant; the school is gaining good value from this arrangement. The consultant helps advise it on a range of matters from sharing best practice with similar schools, reviewing the students' performance compared with all others nationally and providing regular reports to the principal and governing body. This is being very effective at ensuring equality of opportunity for all students.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well informed about school life, students' attainment in relation to others nationally and their progress towards school targets. This results from its regular monitoring activities and reports it receives from staff and the principal on teaching and standards. However, governors have not always been provided with sufficient information about students' rates of learning and progress. Governors with specific responsibilities usually carry these out conscientiously, and take up training to help them in their governance work. The practical safeguarding of students meets government requirements. The responsible committee checks regularly on the setting of targets for teachers; these are linked closely to national teaching standards and salary structure. The governing body evaluates the use of the pupil premium funding and produces a statement showing how it is spent. This funding is being used principally to finance a range of focused individual support for students, and to subsidise any additional resources they may need to complete successfully their courses.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136636
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	400221

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	763
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Carrington
Principal	Andrew Hutchinson
Date of previous school inspection	01 October 2008
Telephone number	01223 712600
Fax number	01223 712601
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