

Inspection of a good school: Heathfield Community College

Cade Street, Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 8RJ

Inspection dates:

10–11 March 2020

Outcome

Heathfield Community College continues to be a good school.

There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a section 5 inspection now.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are thriving at this school. They benefit from an excellent all-round education. Pupils achieve highly in the subjects they study and grow into confident and responsible individuals.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and they are proud of it. Pupils conduct themselves very well and live up to leaders' high expectations of behaviour. They show respect and courtesy to their peers and the adults that work with them. Around the school, the atmosphere is warm and friendly. Bullying is extremely rare and dealt with promptly, if it does occur.

Many pupils take advantage of the extensive range of clubs and activities provided outside of their regular lessons. Pupils have numerous opportunities to develop leadership and have their say in how the school is run. The school's newspaper, radio and TV stations showcase a wide range of pupils' talents, interests and contributions to the local community.

Pupils feel safe at school. They are exceptionally well cared for. Parents and pupils praise the very high quality of pastoral care that the school provides. One parent's view reflected those of many, commenting via the Ofsted Parent View survey, 'This is a fantastic school with high academic standards and excellent pastoral care.'

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

Leaders have developed an innovative and ambitious curriculum for all pupils. Leaders have carefully considered what pupils should learn and the order in which things are taught. For example, the English texts have been selected because they are progressively more challenging in their themes and vocabulary. In science, pupils gain secure

knowledge because the curriculum has been carefully planned, so that key concepts are revisited regularly. Pupils' subject learning is enhanced through an extensive out-of-lesson offer. For example, pupils benefit from whole days going into depth in a subject. Leaders check carefully that pupils take advantage of the wide range of additional learning opportunities that are available to them. Leaders go out of their way to ensure that the most disadvantaged pupils have the same opportunities as other pupils.

Pupils have an excellent grounding in a range of academic subjects. High proportions of pupils study the English Baccalaureate subjects in key stage 4. In addition, the flexible structure of the curriculum ensures that very high proportions of pupils continue to study arts and technology subjects. As a result of the effective curriculum in key stages 3 and 4, pupils are really ready for their next steps and have a broad range of skills.

Teachers use their expert subject knowledge to plan and deliver activities in a logical order that helps pupils build on what they have learned before. They use probing and often very challenging questions to make sure pupils know and remember what has been taught. For example, in history, Year 9 pupils were able to analyse information about vaccination because they remembered previous learning and could relate it to modern day examples. However, teachers could raise their expectations further and check pupils' understanding even more thoroughly in modern foreign languages.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive excellent support. Staff have the same high ambitions for these pupils as they do for others. Technology is used very effectively to enhance pupils' learning. Well-considered approaches enable pupils to access the curriculum and support them to organise and present their work.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They establish clear routines and boundaries. These go hand in hand with well-planned teaching and, all together, they mean that pupils behave very well in class.

Pupils are very well prepared for the next steps in their education, employment or training. Pupils are very successful in public examinations at the end of key stage 4 in almost all subjects. Pupils with SEND and lower prior attaining pupils achieve exceptionally well. Pupils benefit from a comprehensive careers information and guidance programme, including curriculum days that focus on careers in specific subject areas, such as the arts.

The sixth form is very successful. Sixth-form students participate enthusiastically in lessons. For example, Year 13 English literature students were engrossed in debating Shakespeare's portrayal of characters in Othello. Students achieve well in a wide range of A levels. They are fully involved in the life of the school. They organise many events, such as the mentoring programme to help younger pupils with their learning. After sixth form, a high proportion of students successfully enter further education, employment or training.

Leaders do not rest on their laurels and are constantly striving to improve the school further. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about leaders' concern for their workload and well-being.

In discussion with the headteacher, we agreed that reviewing the continued impact of the wider curriculum on pupils' subject learning and personal development (including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development) may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection. This would include inspectors looking again at modern foreign languages.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff share in the responsibility for ensuring pupils are kept safe. Governors and leaders set the right vigilant tone that 'it could happen here'. The safeguarding team work well with teachers and pastoral staff to support pupils at risk.

Leaders regularly update staff on local safeguarding issues. Staff at all levels know what to do if they have concerns about pupils. The designated safeguarding lead keeps meticulous records.

Parents say that their children feel safe at school. Pupils know who to go to if they need help and feel confident that their concerns will be dealt with.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Expectations in modern foreign languages do not always match the very high ambitions evident in other subjects. The recruitment of specialist staff has been a challenge in this subject. Pupils could develop even more confidence and fluency in their spoken and written communication. Teachers do not yet check all pupils' learning fully. Senior leaders should ensure that the curriculum in languages is implemented as consistently well as it is in other subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good, or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 24 May 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	114587
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10127929
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,478
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	293
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Richard Karn
Headteacher	Caroline Barlow
Website	http://www.heathfieldcc.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 May 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a specially resourced provision for up to 12 pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Currently, 13 pupils use this provision.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- We held meetings with the headteacher and senior leaders. We also met with a range of teaching and support staff.
- We evaluated the quality of education by looking in detail at the teaching of English, science, history, modern foreign languages and design technology. We discussed curriculum design with leaders, carried out lesson visits, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers from the lessons visited about the curriculum. In addition,

we visited a number of creative arts lessons, including art, music, drama and photography.

- We evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding. The school's single central record was reviewed. We met with the designated safeguarding lead and pastoral staff.
- We met with governors and a representative from the local authority.
- We considered the views of 103 members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff survey, 276 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the 274 free-text responses. We met with groups of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally about the school. We took account of the 894 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Mark Bagust, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Bzikot	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Lee	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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