

Inspection of a good school: Portslade Aldridge Community Academy

Chalky Road, Portslade, Brighton, East Sussex, BN41 2WS

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 November 2021

Outcome

Portslade Aldridge Community Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and staff agree that, despite the ongoing growth of the school, everyone at PACA is known. Pupils are positive about the good friendships they have made. There is a strong respect for diversity. This means pupils can explore their own views and identity in a safe school where everyone knows bullying is unacceptable.

Everyone recognises that the expectations of what pupils can and will achieve have continued to increase over recent years. Pupils recognise that staff want the very best for them. Nearly all pupils are consistently keen to learn. This is reflected in calm and purposeful lessons. Thoughtful support is given to the small group of pupils who find focusing more difficult.

Pupils are confident that teachers will listen to their worries and concerns. As one pupil said, 'our voice is heard'. The support for well-being has been particularly valued in recent times. Pupils are positive about the detailed careers guidance they receive as well as the many leadership opportunities on offer. They are proud of their roles as prefects, members of the school council, librarians, and mental health champions. Pupils also appreciate the time staff take to explore the developments pupils want to see in their school.

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

High aspirations for every pupil are at the heart of the school's ambitious curriculum. Leaders want pupils to achieve well academically. Alongside this, there is an emphasis on providing each pupil with the life skills they will need for adulthood. The school's personal development offer is a particular strength of the school. The 'PACA 100' identifies the wider experiences staff want all their pupils to have had by the time they leave school. Some of these are included within the curriculum. For example, pupils in key stage 3 eagerly look forward to their fortnightly enrichment sessions as a time to develop a particular interest or talent. These include singing in the pop, rock and soul choir as well as supporting environmental projects in 'Eco Club'.

Leaders are in the process of implementing a well-planned curriculum across the school. This has been particularly useful for teachers in identifying any gaps in learning that have emerged because of the disruption caused by COVID-19. In some subjects, teachers can quickly pinpoint where pupils have gaps in their knowledge and can remedy these efficiently. This is not the case in a small number of subjects where curriculum planning is not yet consistently in place. Leaders are working with staff to ensure the learning and assessment in all subjects is secure to help pupils achieve well across the curriculum.

Many parents who responded to Ofsted's Parent View described the care and support offered by staff across the school. This included parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Well-trained staff work with these pupils to identify their needs in 'Individual Pupil Plans'. Interventions led by the 'Aspirations Centre' provide beneficial individualised support. This includes help for any pupils who find reading more difficult. However, not all the learning in the classroom is as well adapted as it should be. This is a priority for leaders. Training is currently taking place to give staff appropriate knowledge to help them meet the needs of every pupil they teach.

Pupils know the school rules that they are expected to follow each day. They also know the consequences for breaking these rules. As part of this, pupils are asked to reflect upon their behaviour. This gives pupils valuable time to explore how they are feeling in readiness to return to their learning in the classroom. Staff readily look for different opportunities for pupils to think about the choices they make and actions they take.

Staff are very positive about the support they receive from school leaders, governors and the multi-academy trust. There is a collective determination across the school to continue to make further improvements that will benefit everyone at PACA and the local community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff take the safety of their pupils very seriously. Pupils say they feel safe because they know that any concerns about their well-being are dealt with quickly. The school benefits from support from the multi-academy trust and the local authority in ensuring pupils and families get the right support when they need it the most.

Staff have a great deal of knowledge about the potential risks to pupils, both in the local area and when pupils are online. The schools personal, social and health education sessions each week explore these with pupils in an age-appropriate way.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While leaders have created a carefully planned and sequenced curriculum, this is yet to be securely and consistently embedded across every subject. This means that in a

small number of subjects, further refinements are needed to ensure pupils can confidently recall and use the identified knowledge and skills. Leaders should continue to monitor the full implementation of the curriculum to ensure pupils know and remember more across every subject.

- Despite detailed planning, learning is not always adapted successfully to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders should carefully monitor the full implementation of the training that is currently taking place. This will help all pupils, including those with SEND, acquire the knowledge they need in readiness for the next stage of their education. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.

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 outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 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 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.

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	137063
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10200360
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	963
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Brent Thomas
Principal	Mark Poston
Website	http://www.paca.uk.com/
Date of previous inspection	9 – 10 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Aldridge Education multi-academy trust.
- The school previously had a sixth form. This closed in 2020.
- The school uses two registered and two un-registered alternative providers to provide education and support for a very small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. An inspector also spoke with the multi-academy trust's chief executive. They also spoke with a representative from the board of trustees and the chair of the local governing body.

- The inspection team carried out deep dives in English, geography and modern foreign languages. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers, and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the 118 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including 57 free text comments. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys as well as gathering additional views throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors viewed the school's website and policies, met with the designated safeguarding leaders, spoke with pupils and staff, checked school records of safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school and spoke with governors.

Inspection team

Aimee Floyd, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Summerfield

Ofsted Inspector

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