

# Inspection of ContinU Plus Academy

Finepoint, Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY11 7FB

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Inspection dates:

9 and 10 February 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Sixth-form provision

**Outstanding**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Supportive relationships and high expectations lie at the heart of this inspirational school. 'We will work it out' is more than a school motto. This is a community that works out what is best for the pupils and strives to achieve it.

Pupils join ContinU Plus Academy (CPA) because of previous difficult school experiences. Many have had long periods away from school. Most have faced periods of suspension or exclusion from previous schools. Consequently, many bring with them some challenging behaviours. However, caring staff who know the pupils well and an outstanding provision mean that unwanted behaviour rarely affects their or others' learning.

Leaders and staff work as an excellent team to go 'above and beyond' for their pupils. Outdoor education, fishing, caving and volunteering in soup kitchens are just some powerful opportunities provided. Rewards such as shopping vouchers inspire high attendance and engagement in lessons. Visits from motivational speakers and international music superstars inspire pupils to make the right decisions for their lives.

Pupils know that bullying can happen, but they are confident that staff will deal with it. Pupils told inspectors that they know staff 'have got their backs'. Inspectors absolutely agree.

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

The headteacher, supported by a strong leadership team, provides inspirational leadership to this school. There is a quiet determination that all pupils will learn and experience memorable and life-changing experiences. High expectations drive the school's work, and staff and pupils rise to these expectations. All involved in this community are proud of what they have achieved and what is now possible for the future.

Leaders have created a curriculum that helps pupils to learn and remember new things and to overcome the barriers they have experienced in the past. Mathematics and subjects such as English and art build on what the pupils have remembered in their previous education settings, whatever that might be. Every lesson is carefully implemented so that pupils experience challenge and success. As a result, pupils are confident to talk about what they have learned and are excited by new challenges. The use of off-site alternative provision enhances the curriculum. Pupils access learning and qualifications in horse-riding or hair and beauty.

Reading is appropriately prioritised for all pupils. Many pupils, when they join the school, are not able to read confidently and see little enjoyment or purpose in doing so. Leaders and staff carefully utilise everyday opportunities to develop these reading skills. Mid-morning brunch, for example, allows staff and pupils to read the daily papers together. In subjects such as science or food technology, pupils are

encouraged and supported to read. When pupils need specific help, catch-up sessions are provided by skilled and well-trained staff.

When pupils start at ContinU Plus, full information about their needs is not always provided to the school. Leaders overcome this barrier by quickly assessing pupils' needs. Annual and termly reports focus on what the pupil has learned, remembers and can do. When the time is right, leaders work closely with the new school, college or employer to support the next steps. Consequently, nearly all progress to employment, training or education.

For those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), CPA offers understanding and hope. For many pupils, the reason why they have previously found learning difficult has never been fully identified. At CPA, leaders act quickly to identify what these needs might be. Educational psychologists, speech and language therapists and specialist learning mentors work with staff to precisely assess the need and identify appropriate provision. All pupils with SEND experience the same ambition and opportunities as all other pupils.

Personal development is exemplary. All pupils experience a curriculum that builds their knowledge and skills to help them to become positive citizens. Pupils are respectful and kind to each other. They often support and encourage each other. They know what they need to do to keep themselves safe. For example, all pupils will leave with qualifications in the awareness of misuse of drugs and alcohol and in health and well-being. An impressive range of educational visits to places such as a beach, places of worship or the school's own outdoor education centre widens pupils' view of the world.

The new sixth-form provision provides vital support for those excluded from mainstream schools in Year 11. Leaders expect students to get the same high quality of education as younger pupils. This expectation is realised. Lessons are carefully designed to ensure that students have the necessary skills, knowledge and qualifications to progress to the course or job they want. All students are very well prepared for their next steps. All pupils, including students in the sixth form, receive appropriate careers advice and guidance.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Clear policies and regular training mean all staff know how to act when they are concerned about a pupil. When they are worried about a pupil's welfare, they act quickly to raise concerns. Leaders investigate these concerns to make sure the pupil is safe.

The safeguarding curriculum is exemplary. This is a school where pupils rightly feel safe. Recently, when a group of pupils had been at risk of knife crime, leaders acted swiftly to dedicate a whole week of lessons to promote awareness of keeping safe in the community.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139648
<b>Local authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10213022
<b>Type of school</b>	Alternative provision
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 17
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	67
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	4
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Julie Reilly
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sara Devo
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://continuplus.org.uk/">http://continuplus.org.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	29 April 2015

## Information about this school

- A sixth-form provision started in September 2017 to meet the needs of those students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools during Year 11.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, inspectors focused on the following subjects: mathematics, art, English and personal, social, health and economic education. In these

subjects, they visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, examined teachers' plans and talked with pupils and staff about the way these subjects were taught. Inspectors also looked at other subjects in less detail to evaluate how they were planned and taught.

- Inspectors asked pupils, staff, leaders and governors about safeguarding arrangements. They examined the record of employment checks on school staff and looked at other school records. They also found out about safety procedures and routines.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day, to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors visited one of the alternative provisions that the school uses to sample the quality of commissioning and quality assurance by leaders of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held formal meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject teachers, governors, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally with pupils and staff to gather general information about school life. Inspectors spoke to representatives from the local authority (LA), senior leaders of schools that have used the school and LA officers who have worked with the school.

### **Inspection team**

Chris Pollitt, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Janet Lewis

Ofsted Inspector

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