

Inspection of Cockburn School

Parkside, Gipsy Lane, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS11 5TT

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Cockburn School is at the heart of the community. Leaders' ambition and support for the pupils who attend the school are exceptional. Staff and leaders share one vision: a 'transformation to excellence'. Pupils treat each other with respect and dignity. They are fully confident in reporting rare instances of bullying because leaders encourage this. Pupils know that bullying will not be tolerated. This means that pupils are happy, confident and safe at school.

Pupils demonstrate ambition and pride because they are encouraged and supported to be their best. Leaders have the same high expectations for all. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the same broad, rich curriculum as their peers. Leaders have developed an incredibly rewarding arts curriculum that enthuses pupils in subjects such as dance and drama. Pupils are encouraged to be active, responsible citizens through reward schemes that inspire them to help their local community.

The school site is very calm and incredibly purposeful. Pupils are enormously interested in lessons because curriculum planning is detailed. Teachers use very high-quality resources. Pupils are admirably independent. They listen carefully to teachers' instructions and then apply themselves diligently to the work set. Relationships between adults and pupils are built on mutual respect. This extends to pupils' respect for the vibrant and engaging school environment. Pupils wear uniform impeccably and are proud to hold positions of responsibility, such as those of pupil ambassador or member of the school council.

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

Leaders' clear vision is to make this school the beating heart of the community. The high aspiration for pupils is very well understood and shared by all staff. Central to this purpose is the idea that Cockburn School must inspire its pupils. Leaders meet this aim through the design and delivery of a broad, rich curriculum. Pupils' creativity is nurtured and developed through an arts curriculum that is rare in its scope and ambition. In mathematics, leaders constantly refine an already superb curriculum offer. Teachers know the important knowledge that pupils must remember because the curriculum design in each subject is clear to them. Leaders in modern foreign languages make careful links between grammatical knowledge and important topics. This is encouraging more pupils to complete the English Baccalaureate, and the number of pupils taking this qualification is rising.

The clarity in curriculum planning means that pupils, including those with SEND, produce work of outstanding quality. Pupils can use complex, subject-specific vocabulary during discussions with teachers. In English, inspectors heard pupils make sophisticated, independent points about the effects of metaphors in non-fiction writing.

The knowledge that pupils need is understood by all. Pupils are empowered to independently check how well they are learning. This builds their confidence. Teachers make regular checks on what pupils have remembered. There is absolute clarity about gaps in pupils' knowledge and teachers use this information to adapt the curriculum and inform lesson planning.

Leaders act swiftly to identify pupils who may need help in learning to read. They use this information to implement tailored plans to develop pupils' reading skills. Those pupils at the early stages of reading are helped by expert phonics teachers. This means that they learn to read quickly. All subjects expose pupils to high-quality texts to read. For example, in art and design, pupils read articles about the lives of the artists they study. Many pupils use a computer programme that they can access at home to develop their reading skills. In history, leaders are purchasing modern non-fiction texts for budding historians to read in their own time. Pupils' reading is therefore wide and varied.

Behaviour systems are clear, simple and deeply embedded. The strong focus on positive aspects of behaviour means that pupils value the system. Leaders work tirelessly with hard-to-reach pupils, and everyone has a chance for a fresh start. Behaviour around the school site is exemplary. Pupils have highly developed levels of respect for each other and for the community in which they live. This reflects the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, which is clearly sequenced and taught by specialists. The atmosphere in the school is exceptionally positive.

The rewards system is connected to extra-curricular activities. As a result, this encourages pupils to take part in the extensive extra-curricular offer that leaders have developed. Leaders are relentless in ensuring that links with universities and sports clubs are developed. This means that pupils' aspirations are raised and their horizons are broadened. During the inspection, one group of pupils was excited to be visiting a local university. The information and communication technology (ICT) department has developed exceptional links with international businesses to offer enriching qualifications to pupils. The extra-curricular offer has a clear strategic purpose. It is precisely connected to the school curriculum to help pupils remember what they learn during the school day. Pupils with SEND access the full extra-curricular offer. Leaders also offer specific activities to assist in the development of motor skills for pupils with SEND.

Pupils are well informed about the various opportunities available to them once they leave Cockburn School, including apprenticeships and college places. As a result, pupils in Year 11 feel confident about the next phase of their education. Many aspire to higher education. Pupils are excited about their future.

Governors and trustees receive detailed information from leaders about the school. They visit regularly and ask probing questions about developments in, for example, the curriculum. This helps to ensure that leaders maintain the highest standards. Leaders seek the views of parents and carers and pupils regularly. One parent told inspectors about the 'exceptional' support offered to pupils at the school. Inspectors agree. Teachers are proud to work at the school. They are given time to observe

other colleagues and engage in professional conversations across the multi-academy trust. Excellent practice is widely shared.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel very comfortable and incredibly safe around school. They trust adults to deal with problems if they arise. Leaders make excellent use of support from external agencies, including the police, to strengthen systems around safeguarding.

Systems for recording safeguarding concerns are robust and thorough. Staff training is regular and takes account of the local context. Consequently, adults are alert to the signs that may indicate pupils are at risk of harm. Governors regularly question leaders about safeguarding and know that leaders take quick and decisive action when safeguarding issues arise.

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	142585
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	10211959
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,262
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Nuttall
Headteacher	David Gurney (Executive Headteacher) Rob Dixon (Headteacher)
Website	www.cockburnschool.org
Date of previous inspection	30 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Cockburn School converted to become an academy school in February 2016. When its predecessor school, Cockburn School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is in a partnership with Elliot Hudson College for sixth-form provision.
- The school uses five alternative providers. These are: The Stephen Longfellow Academy; Southway; The Elland Academy; Queenswood Education Centre; and Footsteps. Footsteps is part of Cockburn John Charles Academy.
- There have been new appointments in the leadership of English and humanities since the previous inspection.
- The school meets the requirement of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Year 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 had 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.

- Inspectors spoke to the executive headteacher, who is also the chief executive officer of the trust and head of school. They also spoke with senior leaders with responsibility for behaviour and for the curriculum. Inspectors spoke with the chief operating officer. Inspectors also spoke with representatives from all the alternative providers of education used by the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, ICT and computing, modern foreign languages and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at some samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at assessment systems and curriculum plans in art and design and science, as well as speaking to senior leaders about assessment.
- Inspectors visited lessons in art, dance and drama.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders and scrutinised curriculum planning for the PSHE curriculum. They also spoke to leaders about careers advice and guidance.
- Inspectors visited extra-curricular clubs and looked at records of attendance at these clubs.
- Inspectors spoke with the special educational needs coordinator and looked at record-keeping and information for pupils with SEND. Inspectors also visited lessons to examine how teachers adapted lessons for pupils with SEND.
- To examine safeguarding, inspectors spoke with leaders for safeguarding and scrutinised records of actions taken by leaders, including bullying records. Inspectors also looked at the single central record and spoke to staff responsible for maintaining this.
- Inspectors spoke with governors and trustees, including the chair of trustees, and scrutinised records of governor meetings. Inspectors also looked at copies of the headteacher's most recent reports.
- Inspectors conducted a walk to look at behaviour across the school site, as well as observing lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils both formally and informally, including single-sex groups of pupils and pupils in positions of leadership.
- Inspectors examined responses to surveys of staff, pupils and parents, including Ofsted's Parent View.

Inspection team

Matthew Vellensworth, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Linkins	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Pridding	Ofsted Inspector
Lyndsey Brown	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector

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