

Inspection of iCollege Alternative Provision

88 Newtown Road, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 7BT

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 April 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Adults have created a calm, kind and nurturing atmosphere. They build warm and trusting relationships with pupils, who feel safe and comfortable as a result. Pupils want to please their teachers and are keen to succeed. They are polite and courteous. During the inspection, for example, pupils in 'The Pod' were careful to say 'please', 'thank you' and 'excuse me' in lessons and during the lunch break.

Pupils behave well most of the time. Lunchtimes are relaxed and sociable times. During the inspection, for instance, pupils at 'Integration' enjoyed chatting together while eating bacon sandwiches. Pupils trust adults to sort out any worries. One explained that staff understand them well. Staff take suitable steps to explore and address any concerns about bullying.

Teachers celebrate pupils' successes at every step of the way. Pupils feel valued and learn that they can be successful. They begin to look forward to a brighter future as, little by little, confidence and self-belief grow. Pupils' thoughts, displayed in the classrooms, include: 'Be happy – it will be all right', and tell the story of their growing self-confidence. One parent said, 'My child is thriving and can finally see what he can achieve.'

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

Leaders have established a broad, well-sequenced and ambitious curriculum. Pupils join the school at different points in the school year. Pupils have often had an unsettled time before joining the school. Leaders are highly skilled in identifying pupils' needs. They tailor the curriculum in each setting carefully, to build on pupils' starting points. The school rightly prioritises pupils' mental health and well-being. Strong relationships between adults and pupils are central to the school's success.

Most pupils make impressive progress. However, some do less well than they could. This is because there are differences in the quality of teaching across the school. Adults monitor pupils' responses continuously during lessons. They usually adapt activities swiftly when pupils lose focus or become frustrated. This helps to ensure that pupils continue to learn. However, in some subjects, staff lack the depth of subject knowledge needed to deliver the curriculum consistently well.

All pupils in the older year groups achieve national qualifications, such as functional skills and GCSEs. Leaders make sure that pupils are suitably equipped with the knowledge and skills needed for the next stage of education, training or employment. The school's highly effective careers programme provides pupils with high-quality advice about future options.

The school teaches reading effectively. Pupils are often reluctant to read when they join the school. Adults use a wide range of activities and approaches well to encourage enjoyment of books. They use every opportunity, no matter how brief, to support reading. During the inspection, for instance, one primary-age pupil happily

read a 'Harry Potter' book to the school's pet rabbit, pausing from time to time to make sure it was enjoying the story.

A well-established phonics programme supports early reading skills successfully. Teachers in all year groups are equally committed to developing pupils' reading skills. Pupils read increasingly well and some make significant progress.

Pupils behave well in lessons most of the time. They are pleased when adults recognise and celebrate their achievements. Consistent routines support pupils' behaviour effectively. The school provides a wide range of activities and experiences to support pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about different religions, beliefs and viewpoints. They are reflective about their own experiences and make sensible comments during class discussions about issues such as sexism and bullying.

Leaders and governors are alert to staff's welfare and workload. All staff who completed Ofsted's survey say that they are proud to work in the school. One commented, 'There is mutual understanding and respect for what we all do.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders use training well to ensure that staff have an up-to-date understanding of safeguarding matters. Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures and know what to do if they are worried about a pupil. They report concerns promptly. Leaders take suitable action when needed. They work closely and constructively with agencies such as social care and the police to ensure pupils' safety.

Safeguarding records are completed properly most of the time. However, occasionally entries lack sufficient detail about the concern raised and actions taken.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Variations in teaching and staff's subject knowledge mean that pupils do not always learn as well as they could. Leaders have already identified this aspect of the school's work for further development. They should strengthen staff's subject knowledge to ensure that all subjects are taught consistently well.
- Inspectors identified minor improvements needed in the accuracy and maintenance of safeguarding records. Leaders should strengthen procedures to ensure that records are always completed fully.

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	131066
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10210894
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Maureen Sims
Headteacher	Jacqueline Davies
Website	www.college.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 February 2015

Information about this school

- iCollege Alternative Provision was established in September 2017 following the amalgamation of The Alternative Curriculum Service and The Reintegration Service. The school operates from five sites in West Berkshire.
- The school's age range changed at the time of the amalgamation. It provides places for pupils between the ages of five and 19.
- The school currently uses eight unregistered alternative providers.

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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers and other members of staff. The lead inspector spoke with five governors, including the chair of governors. She also had a telephone discussion with the head of education from the local authority.

- Inspectors held telephone conversations with some parents. They also considered the views expressed by parents, staff and pupils in Ofsted’s surveys.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science, personal, social and health education and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils informally in lessons, during the lunchtime break and around the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of safeguarding records and documents, including the single central record. They also met with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed the school’s safeguarding records.

Inspection team

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