

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Sedgefield Community College

Hawthorn Road, Sedgefield, Stockton-on-Tees, County Durham TS21 3DD

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Inspection dates:

4 and 11 May 2022

## **Outcome**

Sedgefield Community College continues to be an outstanding school.

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

Sedgefield Community College is not just a community in name only. Pupils and staff feel that this is a place where they are safe, happy and valued. Pupils trust that staff have their best interests at heart. This is an environment where pupils are being moulded to be positive citizens and to achieve their very best. Staff are invested in the success of pupils. Pupils' successes are important to the school community. In reception, there are pictures celebrating the achievements of pupils who have recently left the school. Equally, leaders continue to offer careers guidance to pupils who have left if their plans change. Parents praise the caring nature of the school and the way it builds confidence and resilience.

Pupils' behaviour around school is impeccable. Pupils treat each other with courtesy and respect. They act maturely and are polite to visitors. The atmosphere around school is calm yet purposeful. Pupils learn in central, open classrooms and are focused and engaged. Leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and academic success. Pupils rise to meet these.

Pupils are taught clear messages about respecting diversity, which lays the foundation for a culture where bullying is not tolerated. Pupils are clear about how they could report any concerns and agree that bullying is tackled decisively by staff. Older pupils explain that education empowers them to challenge bullying in all its forms.

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

Leaders have created a curriculum that is highly ambitious in its aspiration for what all pupils will learn. Leaders carefully balance academic success alongside building pupils' character. Subject leaders have thought carefully about how their subjects can support the broader personal development of pupils. The books that pupils read in English are carefully chosen to tackle important social issues, as well as promote a love of literature. Pupils participate in debate lessons across subjects, focused on topics that will deepen their understanding of the world, particularly in science and history. As a result of these careful choices, academic subjects contribute meaningfully to pupils' broader

development. Leaders demonstrate that academic success and preparation for modern life are intertwined to ensure that pupils have the best possible life chances.

Teachers plan lessons carefully linked directly to the curriculum in place. They use a consistent structure so that pupils can build on what they already know. This 'inevitable progress' model means that pupils are helped to make links to their prior learning and move forwards. Teachers use questioning carefully to pull the highest quality answers from pupils. They check pupils' understanding regularly and ensure that any gaps in knowledge are closed. Teachers use assessment effectively to help pupils progress through the curriculum and identify areas where teaching needs to be adapted. Pupils are engaged in classrooms and are keen to learn. They ask perceptive questions and want to discuss ideas. The quality of work that pupils produce is impressive.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported effectively to access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Pupils with SEND talk about the range of ways teachers make sure they can succeed. One pupil summed up the collective view when they said that teachers 'really know what helps me'. Daily support is provided for pupils who struggle with reading to ensure they catch up quickly.

This school celebrates difference and equality. Pupils strongly feel that they are taught to respect people from other backgrounds. One pupil explained, 'We're all the same really – you just have to be yourself.' Leaders have chosen experiences deliberately, including visits from a range of external speakers, that will broaden pupils' horizons by covering topics such as gender identity, racism and discrimination. Leaders tackle sensitive topics decisively and challenge unacceptable attitudes to create a culture where pupils feel safe. Pupils talk maturely about challenging negative stereotypes through education.

Leaders have developed a careers programme that is impartial, personalised and aspirational. Pupils from Year 7 onwards learn about the world of work and the options open to them after school. Older pupils appreciate the personal guidance they receive. Leaders consider local employers and adapt the curriculum to ensure that pupils are well prepared to compete for apprenticeships. Pupils with SEND and vulnerable pupils are prioritised to ensure they have the right support to make important choices about their future.

Staff at all levels of experience speak of the supportive climate of the school. They explain that leaders are considerate of their well-being and that their opinions are listened to. Leaders ensure that workload is taken into account. Staff are proud to work in this school and be a part of this community.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe in school and all report having a trusted adult. They are explicitly taught how to keep themselves safe, and leaders use visiting speakers to educate pupils about serious issues, for example the police. Pupils are clear about how they can report any worries they might have. Pupils frequently refer to the 'big red button' on the website.

Leaders ensure, and logs indicate, that staff are vigilant in logging any concerns they spot. Leaders are proactive in identifying pupils who may be vulnerable. Staff work closely with external agencies to support these pupils and their families. Leaders keep detailed records of timely actions taken to keep pupils safe.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 predecessor school, Sedgefield Community College, to be outstanding in March 2017.

## 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>	147670
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10229078
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	985
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Susanna Kempe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Fleming
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sedgefieldcommunitycollege.co.uk">www.sedgefieldcommunitycollege.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Sedgefield Community College joined Laidlaw Schools Trust in March 2020.
- The new headteacher was appointed in May 2022.
- The school uses four registered alternative providers: Endeavour, Engage, Durham Gateway and The Woodlands. They also use one unregistered provider, Education Plus NE.

## 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of school senior leaders. They met with representatives from the trust, including the chair of the trust. They also met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, history and design technology. 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 samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about other subjects. They spoke with leaders responsible for the development of reading across the school.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator and looked at a range of documentation regarding pupils' needs. Inspectors also spoke to pupils with SEND about how the school meets their needs and looked at their provision in lessons.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for safeguarding. They checked logs of actions the school has taken to keep pupils safe. They scrutinised bullying logs.
- Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and checked safer recruitment practices. They checked documentation relating to the alternative provision the school uses with respect to safeguarding checks.
- An inspector spoke with an alternative provider by telephone.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at social times and spoke with pupils informally. They also met with groups of pupils to discuss their experiences.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for: careers education; spiritual, moral, social and cultural programmes; and equality, diversity and community engagement.
- Inspectors also scrutinised a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, behaviour logs and additional communication from parents.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the pupil survey and the staff survey. They also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, the online survey, including the free-text comments.

## **Inspection team**

Katherine Spurr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Milligan

Her Majesty's Inspector

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