

# Inspection of a good school: Ditton Park Academy

Kings Reach, Slough SL3 7UX

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Inspection dates:

29 and 30 March 2023

## Outcome

Ditton Park Academy continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very proud of their vibrant and inclusive school. Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds mix happily together. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and supportive. Pupils enjoy learning here and achieve well. They say that teachers make learning interesting and motivating. As one pupil put it: 'You can tell that the teachers care and want the best for you.'

There is a positive working atmosphere around the school and sixth-form centre. Pupils live up to leaders' high expectations of behaviour. They conduct themselves very well in lessons and when moving around the school. Pupils settle quickly to their work and cooperate with staff and each other. Bullying is rare and dealt with promptly. Discrimination is not tolerated, and this helps pupils to feel safe and well supported. They trust the school's pastoral staff to help them if they have any problems.

Pupils and sixth-form students play an active role in the school and local community. Many hold leadership responsibilities and organise activities like fundraising for charities. For example, sixth-form students organised the school 'culture day'. This enabled pupils to celebrate their different nationalities and cultures.

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

Leaders' expectations of pupils' academic education and achievement are high. In Years 10 and 11, the vast majority of pupils learn English Baccalaureate subjects. Leaders are determined to promote the value of learning modern foreign languages. Subject leaders in other curriculum areas are equally enthusiastic and ambitious for pupils to achieve well. They have thought carefully about what pupils need to learn and when they need to learn it. Some subjects have new leadership, and consequently the curriculum thinking is less well developed. Senior leaders provide effective support to these new subject leaders. They encourage staff to share ideas and good practice.

Staff have secure subject knowledge and teach with enthusiasm. They present information clearly and keep a close eye on pupils' learning to check that they are keeping up. Staff ensure that lessons build upon what pupils have learned previously. Clear routines help pupils to recall important knowledge. Pupils show effort and application in lessons. They want to succeed and take pride in their work. This is particularly the case where curriculum plans are secure and the expectations from staff are consistent.

Leaders are prioritising improving the support that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive. Leaders are clear about what they need to do. They have reorganised the use of learning support staff and this is providing more targeted support for pupils with SEND in class. Staff receive training and are well informed about these pupils' needs. However, they do not consistently adapt their teaching so that pupils with SEND are supported to achieve their very best.

Leaders are ambitious to develop a love of reading for all and have introduced many initiatives and training for staff. Some of these projects are at an early stage. A phonics programme has been recently introduced to support weaker readers, but it is too soon to measure the impact. The strong practice that supports pupils' reading which is found in English is not yet secure in other subjects.

Leaders make sure that pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education, employment or training. Sixth-form students appreciate the help they receive in choosing their sixth-form courses. Once they start in the sixth form, they receive an extensive programme of support to prepare them for applications and interviews. As a result, high proportions of students successfully enter further education, employment or training. Sixth-form students benefit from support to develop their independent learning skills. They value how staff teach them to organise their learning and revise for exams.

The house system and tutoring programme make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development, including in the sixth form. The well-planned personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme includes a range of topics that pupils feel are relevant to them. It includes online safety, British values and how to form healthy relationships. Pupils appreciate and value PSHE sessions. They enjoy debating topical issues and show respect and careful thought while doing so. Many older pupils mentor younger pupils with their learning.

The school is very well led. The whole school community, including trustees and governors, shares leaders' ambitious vision. The school has the confidence of parents. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about leaders' concern for their workload and well-being. They appreciate that leaders listen and address any concerns that they raise. One described the promotion of well-being as 'the essence of what Ditton Park does'.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a well-established safeguarding culture. All staff understand their responsibilities for helping to keep pupils safe from harm. Leaders provide staff with high-quality training

and guidance so they know exactly what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. Robust systems are in place to ensure that all concerns are followed up quickly.

Leaders have an impressive knowledge of individual pupils and the risks that they may face. They work together effectively to ensure that pupils who are potentially at risk from harm receive the help that they need from other agencies.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Staff do not consistently adapt their teaching for pupils with SEND. This means the achievement of these pupils is variable. Leaders should ensure that staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills to adapt their teaching, and rigorously check that pupils with SEND are learning as well as they could.
- The phonics programme has been introduced very recently and strategies to support reading across the curriculum are not embedded. This means that pupils who are at an early stage of reading do not always receive the precisely targeted support that they need to read with accuracy and fluency. Leaders should ensure that existing expertise in the school is shared quickly with those staff who work with these pupils.

## **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 an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 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.

## 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>	141009
<b>Local authority</b>	Slough
<b>Inspection number</b>	10240395
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<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>	1124
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	237
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Debbie Richards
<b>Principal</b>	Nick Caulfield
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.dittonparkacademy.co.uk">www.dittonparkacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20 and 21 June 2017

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the SASH Education Trust.
- The school includes a resourced provision for pupils with specific learning difficulties. Currently, 21 pupils attend this provision.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information about approved technical education 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with a range of leaders, including the principal and senior leaders. They also met with subject leaders, leaders of the sixth form, pastoral leaders, and teaching and support staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, geography, modern foreign languages, music and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed curriculum design with subject leaders, carried out lesson visits, scrutinised pupils' work, spoke to teachers and spoke to pupils from the lessons visited about their learning. In addition, the inspectors visited lessons and spoke to pupils about their learning in some other subjects.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding. They reviewed the school's single central record and met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss case studies of safeguarding referrals.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the trust and the local governing body.
- Inspectors considered the views of members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff survey. The views of parents were taken into account from responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and parents' free-text responses. Inspectors met with groups of pupils formally and informally to discuss their views of the school and considered their responses to the Ofsted survey.

## **Inspection team**

Mark Bagust, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Fry	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Brinkley	Ofsted Inspector

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