

Inspection of an outstanding school: Parkside Community College

Parkside, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB1 1EH

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 April 2023

Outcome

Parkside Community College continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a small school where pupils enrich their understanding of a much wider world. Pupils embrace their teachers' very high expectations about behaviour and learning. Pupils know their teachers help them to be at their very best in everything they do.

Pupils are safe because their mental and physical well-being is at the forefront of all teachers' minds. Pupils appreciate that there is an adult to turn to should they need support.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are curious, eager to learn and interact maturely with each other in class and around school. They participate enthusiastically and engage confidently in debate. Pupils celebrate diversity. They are open minded and do not tolerate prejudice. Any bullying is extremely rare. Should it happen, pupils know teachers deal with it swiftly, and it stops.

Pupils enjoy a multitude of clubs and other extra-curricular activities. This helps them to socialise, widen their cultural knowledge and hone important skills. They learn new languages and develop their sporting abilities. They play board games, perform on stage and sing. Pupils and students in the sixth form make a valuable contribution to school life and the wider community. Pupils perform exceptionally well in national examinations.

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

Ambition is at the heart of the school's curriculum. Leaders ensure pupils learn a broad range of subjects. Around 90% of pupils achieve passes in GCSE subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). The EBacc is a group of academic subjects that provide a foundation for a range of future study and careers. Students in the sixth form study at least six subjects through the International Baccalaureate programme. The knowledge that pupils learn builds on what they have learned before. This provides firm foundations for future learning. Teachers ensure pupils regularly practise what they have learned, which helps them to remember knowledge exceptionally well.

Leaders provide regular training to equip teachers with strong subject knowledge. As a result, teachers introduce new knowledge clearly and in stages. This ensures pupils grasp understanding of complex ideas. Pupils quickly apply this knowledge independently to solve problems and to help them research new knowledge.

Teachers enable pupils, including students in the sixth form, to think critically. They learn to synthesise different viewpoints and use evidence to support their arguments. They express their ideas articulately. Pupils support each other in lessons and respectfully challenge each other's opinions.

Teachers check carefully how well pupils are learning. Teachers' skilful questions pick up on any gaps in pupils' knowledge and when pupils do not understand as well as they should. Teachers sensitively guide pupils to refine their learning.

Pupils read well. They study a range of ambitious texts, which they analyse in depth. Those pupils who fall behind with their reading receive precise support so that they improve.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is strong. Leaders work with outside agencies to identify accurately the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders ensure teachers adapt the curriculum appropriately for pupils with SEND. Leaders regularly evaluate the impact of support given. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve very well.

Leaders have established a highly inclusive ethos. The school is an internationally diverse community where all are welcomed. Pupils concur that the new behaviour system ensures that teachers manage behaviour consistently. Throughout the inspection, inspectors did not witness a single incident of low-level disruption. This reflects pupils' daily experience.

Leaders cater for pupils' wider development exceptionally well. Pupils have many opportunities to represent the views of others. Some pupils manage teams of pupils to assist in areas of school life such as the library and clubs. Sixth-form students write and produce school plays. The social action group campaigns to make the school more environmentally friendly. Pupils demonstrate compassion. They raise money for those less fortunate than themselves. Sixth-form students are highly positive role models. Students reinforce their own subject knowledge and gain teaching experience by supporting teachers in lessons and by tutoring younger pupils. These experiences help pupils and students take responsibility and to hone important leadership skills.

Leaders seek support from several local employers and higher education providers to enrich pupils' careers education. As a result, pupils and students gain valuable work experience and they make informed decisions about their future lives.

Teachers are happy. They appreciate how the trust's support helps them develop their own subject knowledge. They concur that leaders collaborate with them to ensure their workload is manageable. Leaders, governors and the trust robustly evaluate school performance. This ensures the school maintains an outstanding provision for pupils and is very well placed for the future.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure a robust safeguarding culture. They provide frequent training to all staff. As a result of this, staff understand how to identify a pupil who may be at risk of abuse or neglect. They promptly report concerns. Leaders intervene quickly to ensure that pupils receive the support they need. They also work with outside agencies to secure additional help. Leaders make regular checks on the safety of pupils who make use of alternative provision.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and outside of school.

Leaders rigorously scrutinise the suitability of all adults working in the school.

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 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 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.

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	136636
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10242495
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	725
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	70
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Dame Reena Keeble
Headteacher	Craig Morrison (Executive Principal)
Website	www.parksidecc.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 March 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school is part of the United Learning Trust
- The school makes use of five unregistered alternative providers to support a small number of pupils.

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 met with the interim regional director of the trust, chair of governors, other governors, the executive principal, senior leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, languages and science. These included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, meetings with staff and pupils, scrutiny of pupils' work and a review of any curriculum documentation. They also scrutinised other curriculum plans.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's single central record and met with the designated safeguarding leader. They scrutinised safeguarding records and spoke with pupils and with staff.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, staff and parents. There were 47 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 40 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey. There were 222 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors considered 222 free-text responses from parents.

Inspection team

Adam Cooke, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Diana Fletcher

Ofsted Inspector

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