

Inspection of a good school: Patcham High School

Ladies Mile Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 8PB

Inspection dates:

18 to 19 April 2023

Outcome

Patcham High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Patcham High School actively encourages all pupils to experience and value each other's differences, cultures, backgrounds and abilities. It provides a wide range of opportunities through an ambitious academic curriculum that is supported by careers, enrichment and personal development. Welfare, well-being, relationships and sex education are all well covered. Pupils spoken to say that they feel happy, safe and supported.

The school offers a broad extra-curricular programme, covering sports, performing arts and subject specialisms. The programme is extensive, but take up is not as high as it could be. Well-focused careers support ensures that aspirations are high. As a result, significant numbers of pupils continue their education post-16.

Personal development is effective and actively supports pupils' welfare and well-being. The life skills programme is an umbrella for citizenship, careers and religious education. The subject is valued, although some pupils find some of the content repetitive. Cross-curricular links are developing.

Pupils' conduct in classrooms and around the school is generally calm and orderly. Low-level disruption is dealt with quickly and effectively. Incidents of bullying or discriminatory behaviour are scarce. Pupils and parents are aware of who to contact if they have any concerns.

School leaders are actively committed to the school's vision of 'One Team, One Dream'. Senior leaders work very well together to ensure that pupils overcome disadvantage, and no one is left behind. Leaders are passionate about education and relentless in developing pupils' self-esteem and self-respect.

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

The curriculum is well planned, sensibly sequenced and systematically implemented. It is carefully organised across all years and personalised for pupils in this school. It is hierarchical, developmental and suitably linked to the national curriculum.

Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well known and sensitively supported by teachers, mentors and advocates. There is an ambitious drive to ensure that they achieve as well as their peers. Higher attaining pupils are stretched and challenged to deepen their knowledge.

The curriculum is designed to ensure that pupils master it and build knowledge sequentially. Links with partner primary schools are in place and managed well. The success of the school is reflected in the credible performance of pupils in the most recent GCSE examinations.

Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge. They actively seek to develop this knowledge further through ongoing training. Assessment is regular and used to forensically identify where further support is needed to close gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Pupils are encouraged to read every day in order to support them to develop their reading skills. Catch-up programmes are used to aid those who are falling behind. Literacy skills are developed well, and subject-specific language is used accurately, with some support.

Links with other subjects are not always sufficiently pursued to support pupils' wider knowledge and skills. This is particularly noticeable with life skills, where links are still being enthusiastically developed.

Expectations of behaviour are known and reiterated. Relationships are positive and supportive. Attendance is similar to national averages, but punctuality is occasionally lax. The school ensures that pupils are not excluded from education because of challenging behaviour or mental health. The last exclusion was recorded in 2018.

Governors and leaders have a good understanding of the school, as well as their roles and responsibilities. They undertake these with commitment and professionalism. Middle leaders are well supported through effective line management, coaching and access to appropriate training.

Staff say that they are well supported. They are aware of the efforts that leaders make to reduce workload, and they have seen a reduction in administration, which has supported their work-life balance. Staff morale is extremely high.

Leaders work hard to reach out to parents in many ways, particularly in relation to well-being, mental health and safeguarding issues. The headteacher makes himself available for weekly drop-in meetings. The parent survey does not reflect the feedback received by the school or the success evidenced by the popularity of the school.

The school works closely with the local authority, which values the work of the school. The headteacher is highly regarded and leads the citywide secondary school partnership. The local authority confirms that the school has a strong commitment to the community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The single central record is suitably detailed, with all required checks being conducted and verified regularly. The school has effective safeguarding systems in place. It makes beneficial use of external services so that pupils are safe and supported. The school ensures that safeguarding arrangements are robust. This also applies to other institutions where pupils are studying. Safer recruitment practices are rigorously pursued.

The designated safeguarding lead has a robust understanding of the context of the school. All staff receive timely training and frequent updates. They know how to report safeguarding issues. Detailed records illustrate actions taken to ensure pupils' safety. Leaders work with determination and dedication to ensure all pupils are safe. However, a number of pupils, and their parents, remain anxious about the school and its provision for excluded pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Cross-curricular links are not always pursued to support pupils' wider knowledge and skills. As a result, pupils do not always make important connections across their learning. In addition, opportunities to highlight life skills across other subjects are missed. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum supports pupils to make connections, especially in life skills, in order to deepen their understanding.
- A small minority of parents and carers do not feel sufficiently engaged and fully appreciative of the efforts the school is making to safeguard their children. As a result, they feel negative about the school and uninformed about its ethos and vision. Leaders should continue to collaborate with parents so that they are sufficiently engaged with the school and better understand the work that the school is doing.

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 November 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	114608
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10256449
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew Saunders
Headteacher	John McKee
Website	www.patchamhigh.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 to 8 November 2017

Information about this school

- Patcham High School is an average-sized, mixed, non-selective school for pupils aged 11 to 16. The school is maintained by the local authority.
- Forty-six pupils attended courses on a full- or part-time basis at Greater Brighton Metropolitan College and eight other known alternative education providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information about approved technical educational 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 conducted deep dives in English, mathematics, art and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, talked with teachers, spoke to pupils, and looked at samples of their work.

- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, staff and pupils. They looked at the single central record and reviewed the school's safeguarding procedures and practices. Inspectors looked at school policies, curriculum documentation, behaviour logs, attendance records and destination statistics. The lead inspector met with members of the governing board and spoke to representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and additional written comments from parents. They reviewed the survey returns completed by staff and pupils.

Inspection team

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