

Inspection of Heathfield Community College

Cade Street, Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 8RJ

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have very high aspirations for pupils at this school. They are determined that pupils receive a great education. Staff meet the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), well. The school values of 'Pride, Ambition, Community' are lived out in daily life.

Pupils flourish here. They are well mannered and polite. Staff set a high bar in terms of pupils' conduct. Pupils feel happy and safe in this vibrant and nurturing school. They know that the well-regarded pastoral team will help them with any problems. Bullying is rare. If it happens, pupils know how to report it. It is dealt with swiftly by staff.

Pupils benefit from a wealth of leadership opportunities. They relish taking on these important roles, including digital geniuses, sports leaders and eco-reps. Pupils make a real difference to continually improving life at their school. Their views are sought, valued and acted on by leaders.

Pupils enjoy an extensive range of enrichment activities and educational trips. Many participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Others represent their school in sports, music and arts. The school's radio, newspaper and TV station showcase pupils' interests and views on current affairs exceptionally well.

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

Leaders constantly look for ways to make the school even better. They have designed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those in the sixth form. This is now well embedded. Via the 'super curriculum', pupils undertake enrichment projects, such as in digital media. This ensures that pupils receive a well-rounded education and continue to learn about subjects they do not study at GCSE.

Subject leaders have considered what pupils will learn carefully. There is a systematic and well-sequenced curriculum in almost all subjects. Pupils have many opportunities to build on what they know and to develop their understanding further.

Nearly all teachers have deep subject knowledge. Teachers regularly check that pupils have understood and remembered the important ideas. However, a small minority of staff do not always teach as effectively as the strongest. Here, some pupils do not learn as well as they could. Across the school, the judicious use of technology benefits pupils very well. Pupils use their individual devices independently to enhance their understanding.

Pupils achieve well across nearly all subjects, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. However, in 2022, due to staff instability in a minority of subjects, some pupils did not achieve as highly as they could. Staffing in these subjects is now on a more even keel, and pupils' achievement is improving. The

proportion of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate has dipped recently. However, it is now returning to its previously high level. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum prepares pupils for the next stage in their education well. As a result of expert teaching, students in the sixth form achieve exceptionally well. Students immerse themselves in the wider life of the school. They benefit greatly from the support, encouragement and opportunities provided.

Almost all pupils behave well around the school. They appreciate the rewards that they receive for showing positive behaviours. Staff are quick to address any occasional overly exuberant behaviour during social time. During lessons, almost all pupils focus well and are keen learners. Staff act immediately to address the very occasional use of derogatory language. They make it clear to pupils that this is unacceptable and make pupils aware of the wider issues in society.

Leaders have planned an exceptionally wide and rich personal development programme. They make sure that disadvantaged pupils benefit most from this. Pupils are taught about equality and diversity very well. They have a mature understanding of healthy relationships and how to manage risks. Pupils are given helpful careers information and guidance. They are very well supported by the school in making decisions about their futures. For many students in the sixth form, this leads to ambitious destinations. The school develops active, responsible young people, who are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Staff are proud to work at the school. Teachers, including those new to the profession, are well supported. Staff appreciate how leaders seek to reduce their workload. Leaders make sure that staff are given very high-quality professional development.

Governors fulfil their roles effectively. They know the school very well and undertake regular training. Governors provide the right balance of support and challenge to leaders. Parents and carers endorse the work of the school. The vast majority say that their child is happy, safe and doing well. One parent, summing up the views of many, said, 'The school has high expectations, and staff are very encouraging and supportive.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of vigilance around safeguarding. Pastoral staff know students well. Leaders ensure that staff are trained regularly. Staff make sure that any concerns about students are identified and referred to leaders swiftly. Leaders communicate well with external agencies. They are determined to get students the support they may need. Any allegations about members of staff are handled appropriately. Leaders make thorough checks on staff before they start working at the school. Students are taught through the curriculum how to keep themselves safe, including in the local area and online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small minority of staff do not have strong enough pedagogical knowledge. This means that, in some subjects, pupils do not learn and achieve as well as they could. Leaders know this and are supporting staff. Leaders should continue to provide less experienced staff with professional development so that the delivery of the curriculum is strong across all areas.

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	114587
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10256315
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,481
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	288
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Richard Karn
Headteacher	Caroline Barlow
Website	www.heathfieldcc.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 and 11 March 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in post since 2015.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for 12 pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- The school currently uses one alternative provision.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a range of meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, teaching and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with four governors.
- The lead inspector met with the school's local authority adviser.
- An inspector talked to the alternative provision used by the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, science, drama, art and design, modern foreign languages and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and students, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors checked a range of policies and documents, including the school's single central record. They also reviewed the school's website and other records regarding the welfare of pupils.
- Inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour and the school's wider curriculum.
- Inspectors talked to pupils and staff throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. This included the views of pupils and staff submitted via Ofsted's confidential surveys.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted via email and via Ofsted's parent survey.

Inspection team

Maria Roberts, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Rupert Prutton	Ofsted Inspector
Judy Rider	Ofsted Inspector
Eliot Hodges	Ofsted Inspector
Aretha Banton	Ofsted Inspector

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