

Inspection of Parkside Academy

Hall Lane Estate, Willington, Crook, County Durham DL15 0QF

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 September 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Parkside Academy as an academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

The headteacher of this school is Kelly Armstrong. This school is part of Advance Learning Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kelvin Simpson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alan Boddy.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Parkside Academy, pupils benefit from the warm and positive relationships that staff build. Staff ensure that all pupils are valued members of the community. As a result, pupils are happy and safe.

Pupils benefit from an effective curriculum. This is because the school places a strong emphasis on the quality of education. For many pupils, this leads to positive outcomes.

The school is a calm and purposeful place to be. Leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Clear systems support pupils and staff in meeting these aims. Bullying is infrequent in the school. When it does happen, it is dealt with swiftly.

Leaders ensure that pupils have high-quality pastoral support. Pupils participate in year group meetings, assemblies and regular tutor time. This allows pupils to focus on well-being and character development. These reflection opportunities are supported by tutors, who know the pupils well.

Pupils are knowledgeable about the world around them. For example, pupils talk confidently about healthy and unhealthy relationships. They also understand the importance of online safety. This is the result of an effective curriculum for personal development, which includes taught lessons and dedicated, age-appropriate events.

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

The school provides an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have also carefully considered curriculum sequencing so that each new topic builds upon prior learning. For example, in history, pupils in key stage 3 learn about the Romans, the suffrage movement and then the Holocaust. These topics are linked together by the themes of prejudice and persecution.

Leaders have identified important knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need to know. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to provide clear explanations. Teachers also break learning down into smaller chunks, which helps pupils with SEND to build confidence. These approaches enable pupils to recall knowledge from these important parts of the curriculum. However, the curriculum does not always support pupils to apply this knowledge in different ways. Some pupils find it hard to link different elements of knowledge together. This means they are not always fully prepared for more advanced learning.

Leaders place a high priority on reading. Well-trained staff deliver phonics intervention so that the weakest readers quickly catch up with their peers. This is part of a comprehensive package of reading support in the school. The school also ensures there are strategies in place to encourage pupils to read widely and for

pleasure. This includes an e-library, trips to local libraries and reading together during tutor time.

Pupils move around school in a calm and respectful manner. If pupils do not meet the school's high expectations, staff use recently reviewed systems to manage this well. Leaders have developed a broad range of strategies to support pupils who do misbehave. This individual approach supports pupils to learn from their mistakes.

Personal development is a thread that runs through all areas of the school. Leaders are passionate about creating opportunities for pupils they may not otherwise have. As a result, there is a wide range of activities in which pupils can participate. This includes the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and sports leaders' events. However, some pupils do not always make good use of the opportunities the school provides.

The school offers a varied careers programme. This is included in dedicated lesson time, whole-school events and tutor time. Pupils, including those with SEND, progress to a range of courses, employment or training. Some pupils benefit from work experience. With the support of the trust, the school is working towards widening this offer.

Staff are proud to work in the school. They value the continued professional development provided by the school and trust. Leaders consider staff workload and ensure that a range of well-being initiatives are in place. These are well received and contribute to staff feeling happy at work. Trustees and executive leaders are passionate about the school. The school motto, 'your child is our child', underpins how trust leaders support the school's development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils cannot apply and connect their curriculum knowledge in a range of different contexts. As a result, they are not always ready for the next stage of learning, including post-16 learning. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum better helps pupils to build and apply a deep body of knowledge.
- Many students do not make best use of the wide range of personal development opportunities the school provides. This means they are not fully immersed in the life of the school. Leaders should intensify actions to increase pupils' engagement in these activities.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	137903
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10290195
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	965
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Boddy
Headteacher	Kelly Armstrong
Website	http://parksideacademy.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of Advanced Learning Partnership multi-academy trust.
- Parkside Academy converted to become an academy in August 2012.
- A small number of pupils access alternative provision. This provision includes four registered providers and three unregistered providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders over the course of the inspection. The lead inspector also held a meeting with the chief executive officer and other executive leaders from the trust.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the chair of the board of trustees and one other trustee. They also met with the chair of the academy council and one other academy council member. They reviewed documentation relating to governance, including minutes from trust board meetings.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also visited a sample of lessons in other curriculum areas and spoke to additional subject leaders.
- An inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator and visited a sample of lessons to look at the support given to pupils with SEND.
- To inspect the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and the trust safeguarding leader. They reviewed safeguarding records and the school's single central record. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding in school.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for personal development and visited tutor sessions.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and students formally throughout the inspection and spoke with them informally at social times and in lessons.
- A range of school documents was reviewed, including the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and staff gathered through Ofsted's questionnaires.

Inspection team

Hannah Millett, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Nick Horn	Ofsted Inspector
Lucy Toner-Gowland	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Lewis	Ofsted Inspector

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