

Inspection of Uckfield College

Downsview Crescent, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 3DJ

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 April 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's vision of 'inspiring every individual to achieve personal excellence' is highly evident. Lessons are purposeful and productive. Positive relationships are a common feature throughout. The school's 'total participation' strategy ensures that everyone contributes and is supported to learn effectively. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve very well indeed.

Pupils are happy and safe. Exceptional pastoral care underpins this. The 'super-curriculum' provides an extremely rich and varied programme of opportunities to nurture pupils' interests and talents. Activities such as debating club, model railway club and eco club supplement the plethora of sports, arts and academic clubs available. Pupils cherish these wide-ranging opportunities. Sixth-form students thrive when taking on positions of responsibility, such as head student or when contributing to the student leadership team. They are excellent role models and perform their responsibilities with care, dedication and diligence.

The Uckfield qualities of love, integrity and kindness permeate the school. Different opinions are respected and diversity is celebrated. As a result, this is a highly inclusive school. Pupils and parents appreciate the clear routines and high expectations. Parents are very positive about the school. One parent, typical of many, said, 'My child is thriving at this exceptional school'.

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

Pupils benefit from a highly ambitious and broad curriculum. A very high proportion of pupils gain qualifications in the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. Across all subjects, the school has precisely identified the important knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn. Teachers check pupils' learning systematically and identify misconceptions or gaps as part of the proactive 'positive improvement now' (PIN) strategy. Pupils use a range of strategies to correct their mistakes and consolidate key skills very effectively. If there is a temporary dip in performance in a subject, the school addresses this swiftly and effectively.

Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to inspire and engage pupils. Carefully designed activities help pupils build and strengthen their understanding of increasingly complex concepts. Pupils relish challenge and are not afraid of making mistakes. For example, in mathematics, pupils view calculation errors as opportunities to learn and then deepen their understanding. This helps pupils to develop vital confidence and resilience.

The sixth form is highly effective and students achieve highly as a result of the expert teaching they receive. Many pupils choose to stay at Uckfield to complete their studies. The school has broadened the range of vocational subjects to complement the already very strong academic offer.

Disadvantaged pupils, including pupils with SEND, benefit from expert support. Staff address barriers to learning swiftly. Learning assistants provide very effective individual support for pupils. Staff know pupils' needs well. This means pupils get the right help at the right time which enables them to flourish. The school's effective actions mean that these pupils' achievement is improving rapidly.

Reading is a key priority. High-quality texts inspire and engage pupils throughout the curriculum. The school provides exactly the right help for pupils who find reading challenging. Sixth-form students act as reading mentors for younger pupils. Combined, these strategies help pupils gain confidence and the skills they need to develop fluency and enjoy reading.

Pupils' behaviour and conduct are typically excellent. Attendance is very strong. Where necessary, the school takes effective and proportionate action to support any pupils whose attendance begins to decline. A small number of pupils receive individualised and highly tailored support to help them to improve their behaviour. The school uses alternative provision intelligently and effectively.

The wider personal development of pupils is a significant strength of the school. The personal, social and health education curriculum provides pupils with vital knowledge and skills. For example, all pupils learn age-appropriate sex and relationships education. They learn how to debate in 'life learning' lessons and use these skills to discuss and understand what it is like to grow up in modern Britain. At every point, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Transition between key stages is meticulously planned. Pupils new to the school receive targeted support to help them settle and flourish rapidly. Students in the sixth form develop vital independent study skills. All pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, benefit from comprehensive careers information, education, advice and guidance.

The school's 'ceaseless pursuit of learning' extends to staff. Well-being is a priority for all. Staff are confident that leaders consider their workload when planning new initiatives. Training for teachers is unapologetically ambitious and highly effective. Early career teachers receive exceptional support and guidance. All staff, regardless of experience, participate in coaching that improves both their subject knowledge and teaching skills. As a result, staff feel highly motivated and are very proud to work at the school. Governors are ambitious for the school. They provide expertise and robust challenge. Leaders are diligent and highly skilled. Together, their shared commitment to continuous improvement is at the heart of decision making.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	114590
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10287869
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Community
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	1614
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	312
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Julie Laughton
Principal	Sara Marshallsay
Website	www.uckfield.college
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 October 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs a small, resourced provision for pupils with autism.
- The school uses three registered and one unregistered alternative provider.
- 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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders of the school. The lead inspector held meetings with some governors, including the chair of governors. She also met with the school's external improvement partners who work on behalf of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also scrutinised a large sample of work from a range of other subjects.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, published information about pupils' performance and minutes of governors' meetings.
- Inspectors spoke to a wide range of pupils and students in the sixth form and observed their behaviour in lessons and at social times.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including free-text responses. They also took account of the responses to the staff and pupil surveys and gathered the views of parents, staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Linda Culling, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Toby Martlew	His Majesty's Inspector
Ed Mather	His Majesty's Inspector

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