

Inspection of a good school: West Sussex Alternative Provision College

Cuckfield Road, Burgess Hill, West Sussex RH15 8RE

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 May 2024

Outcome

West Sussex Alternative Provision College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils attend West Sussex Alternative Provision College for a short period of time before returning to mainstream or specialist provisions. Many pupils are too ill to attend, so receive their education at home. Some pupils stay longer and a few complete their GCSEs here.

The school prioritises learning effectively. Staff aim to ensure that pupils continue to learn regardless of the challenges they face. Most pupils are happy here. They appreciate the individual support they receive, including the preparation for moving back to mainstream or into specialist provision. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and are highly vigilant to potential concerns. Safeguarding staff are diligent and take precise action to protect vulnerable pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive overall. This helps pupils to feel safe as they know they can confide in staff if they have a concern.

Across most of the sites, pupils generally behave well. Most pupils are supported effectively when their behaviour is more challenging. In the most successful practice, well-trained staff are quick to intervene and use de-escalation strategies successfully. However, this is not consistently the case, particularly at the Lancing site. Here learning is sometimes disrupted by a small minority of pupils. At times, staff do not always address the use of abusive language fully effectively.

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

The school has constructed an ambitious and expertly crafted curriculum. This allows staff to consider pupils' multiple starting points. Individualised approaches support pupils to learn well. This is a particular strength in art, where pupils are inspired by a wide range of artists and stimuli alongside learning to use a range of mediums and techniques. Similarly, the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is thoughtfully planned and delivered well. The school's further refinements to this subject are ongoing and should help alleviate unnecessary repetition.

Teachers have strong levels of subject expertise. They assess pupils' gaps in knowledge and skills on entry to the school. They use this information to inform the personalised approach to learning. Teachers present information clearly. They check for misconceptions and gaps in pupils' knowledge and address them swiftly. The members of a dedicated team of staff provide very strong support to pupils unable to attend in person. This includes excellent individualised learning support and appropriate pastoral care.

The school teaches early reading well. Staff are well trained in the school's chosen phonics programme. Pupils read books that match the sounds they know. This helps to develop confidence and accuracy. Those who have fallen behind are given extra support to catch up quickly, including in the secondary phase. The school has ensured that mathematics is taught well, including for the youngest pupils. The mathematics curriculum is highly ambitious. Leaders provide expert training to staff who are non-specialists, so that their teaching supports pupils to learn exceptionally well.

While the school rightly focuses on improving the attendance of all pupils, some who are able still do not attend regularly enough. Strategies for supporting poor attendance are creative and flexible. Where appropriate, challenge is robust. However, the school rightly recognises that some pupils do not achieve their best outcomes due to lower attendance.

Most pupils in the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Some arrive with unidentified and unmet needs. Their needs are quickly and accurately identified by the school. This helps staff place pupils on the right pathways for support. Most teachers adapt activities for pupils in light of their challenges to learning effectively. Further refinements to sharing precise information about pupils' needs with teachers is ongoing.

The wider personal development of pupils is a strength. The curriculum is enhanced by well-thought-out opportunities to build pupils' cultural capital, for example, by going on visits to local historic sites. Important issues such as tolerance and respect are taught well. Pupils say their school is inclusive and welcoming. Differences are celebrated. This helps prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop enterprise and social skills. Local businesses support this regularly. Learning how to be a barista is very popular and recently pupils designed, made, marketed and sold products at the popular 'Goodwoof' dog show. Careers information, education, advice and guidance are strong. Pupils have realistic aspirations about possible future careers and receive tailored support to help them plan their next steps.

Governors have a strong understanding of the school. They provide appropriate support and robust challenge to leaders. Some staff do not always feel supported in managing challenging behaviour and do not understand the different structures in place for strategic and operational oversight. The school is aware of this and is rightly making ongoing attempts to communicate with staff more effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The attendance of some pupils is lower than it should be. This means that these pupils, particularly the most disadvantaged, do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders should maintain their focus on improving the attendance of all pupils.
- A small number of pupils disturb learning, particularly in the secondary phase. The use of derogatory language sometimes goes unchallenged and the management of some poor behaviour needs sharpening. Leaders must ensure that all staff always maintain the highest standards of behaviour.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2014.

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 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	131182
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10287983
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	407
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Bob Smytherman
Headteacher	Doug Thomas (executive headteacher)
Website	www.apcollege.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- West Sussex Alternative Provision College (WSAPC) is based on five sites over a large geographical area, based in Burgess Hill (all-through), Chichester (primary only), Crawley (secondary only), Littlehampton (secondary only) and Lancing (all-through).
- Pupils are referred by the local authority or mainstream schools for short- or longer-term placements.
- The school also runs Chalkhill and Springtide centre hospital education services, which operate under a separate URN (131189).
- The school is a pupil referral unit that provides education for pupils who are at risk of being or have been permanently excluded from both primary and secondary mainstream schools, those who are out of school for medical reasons and those too sick to attend school.
- Many pupils are dual registered. This means that they remain on the roll of their main school while being educated at WSAPC. Those who are single registered are predominantly waiting for transition to a special school placement or their next mainstream school.
- The school provides remote and blended education for a large number of pupils. These pupils are too ill to attend in-person provision. This includes live remote lessons and in-person teaching in pupils' homes.

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- 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

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, senior leaders and other leaders. They met with a wide range of staff and pupils. They considered the responses to parent, pupil and staff surveys.
- Inspectors visited four of the five sites in person. The lead inspector held a remote meeting with some pupils and staff from the other site.
- A wide range of the school's documentation was taken into consideration, including policies and the school's development plan.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the local governing board, including the chair. She scrutinised the school's accountability plan and how local governors hold leaders to account. The lead inspector also held a meeting with the local authority to discuss the impact of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and PSHE. 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 spoke to a wide range of pupils and observed their behaviour in lessons and at social times.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Linda Culling, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tash Hurtado

Ofsted Inspector

Charles Joseph

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024