



# Parkside Community College

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 110864  
**LEA** CAMBRIDGESHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 278536  
**Inspection dates** 7 December 2005 to 8 December 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mrs. Melanie Kavanagh LI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Parkside
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		CB1 1EH
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01223 712600
<b>Number on roll</b>	603	<b>Fax number</b>	01223 712601
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Dr. Mark Carrington
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr. Andrew Hutchinson

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<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 7 December 2005 - 8 December 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 278536
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Parkside Community College is a mixed comprehensive school catering for students aged 11-16. It is situated in the centre of Cambridge. It is smaller than the average secondary school with a current roll of 603 and is heavily oversubscribed. It was designated a media arts college in 1997. Approximately 70% of students are from White British backgrounds with a broad range of other ethnic backgrounds represented within the remaining 30%. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The number of students with special educational needs is broadly in line with national averages and the proportion of students whose first language is not English is high at 14.4%. In September 2005, Parkside created a federation with a neighbouring school emerging from special measures. The federation has one executive principal and leadership executive, one governing body and integrated teaching teams and support staff.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

Parkside Community College is providing outstanding education overall. Standards are excellent and all students make good progress in their studies. Students feel safe and the college provides a happy and secure environment. Behaviour is exemplary and the working relationships between staff and students are extremely good. Students' personal development and well-being and their care, guidance and support are outstanding. They develop into articulate and confident young people with clear personal and professional goals. Older students provide excellent role models for their younger peers. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress but their targets in individual education plans are not always specific enough. Teaching and learning are outstanding. The planning of lessons is a particular strength. Teachers have expert subject knowledge and use resources such as information and communication technology (ICT) highly effectively. Lessons are interesting and stimulating. Students respond enthusiastically and participate actively through discussions and presentations. They work well both independently and in teams. Teachers are successful in raising students' aspirations and in giving them the confidence to succeed. The college has outstanding links with other agencies, including its recent federation with a school emerging from special measures. The curriculum is good overall with some aspects that are excellent. However, there is insufficient vocational provision to cater for all students' needs. Students receive extensive and impartial careers' advice and are well prepared for their future lives. The college is led and managed outstandingly well with a clear and shared mission to raise standards, improve provision through innovation and to collaborate effectively. Performance management is exceptionally thorough and rigorous through annual and triennial reviews. The college's self-evaluation form prior to inspection accurately identified strengths and weaknesses, but did not provide a self-critical analysis equal to that in the regular reviews undertaken by the college. Lesson observation is extensive and effective in securing improvements to teaching and learning. The college has addressed successfully the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded through a questionnaire as part of the inspection process provided very strong support for the college. The college has an outstanding capacity to improve and provides excellent value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Establish increased vocational provision to meet the needs of all students.
- Ensure that the college's self-evaluation is as self-critical as the regular reviews undertaken.
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of individual education plans through precise target setting for all students.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The overall achievement of students is good, and some aspects are excellent. Students enter the college in Year 7 with attainment that is above the national average, make good progress and reach standards that are significantly above national averages by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. The college is effective in enabling students of all abilities to have some success and the proportion of students achieving 5 GCSEs at grades A\*-G has been consistently above the national average at broadly 97%. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress. Recent results in the end of Year 9 tests have been significantly above average in English, mathematics and science. Achievement and development of ICT skills are high and continue to improve. Results at Key Stage 3 for 2005 are higher than the well above average results of 2004 with a sharp rise in the number of students gaining higher levels in English. The most able students make exceptionally good progress at Key Stage 3. There has been a consistent trend of improvement in GCSE results in the years between 2000 and 2005. The proportion of students achieving 5 GCSE passes at grades A\*-C is well above the national average. The number of students achieving grades A\*-A is consistently and significantly above national averages in a great many subjects including English, mathematics and science. The college sets very challenging targets, most of which are met. Overall, female students achieve better GCSE results than male students. There is a marked difference in the proportions achieving high grades and 5 passes at grades A\*-C. Results are broadly similar at grades A\*-G and both male and female students achieve significantly higher results at Key Stage 4 than national averages.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The personal development of students is outstanding. The college provides a safe and friendly environment. Students become mature and confident young people as they move through the college. They respond very well to the activities that the college provides and clearly enjoy learning. This is reflected in the large number of students who choose to take part in learning activities beyond the college day. The behaviour of students is exemplary in lessons and around the college. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. Older students provide excellent role models and advisers for younger students. Although the college is working to ensure that students attend as regularly as possible, the rate of authorised absence is above average as a result of some parents taking their children on holidays during term time. Students have a very good knowledge of healthy lifestyles and are provided with healthy eating options at lunchtimes. Many students show their enjoyment of physical activities by joining the various sports clubs that the college offers. They know how to keep safe and are well informed about safety issues in general. Students have clear views on school life and readily take responsibility. Older students in particular have exceptionally good opportunities to contribute to the school community. All students are involved actively in charity fundraising. The college council, with three

representatives from each class, makes a significant contribution to decision making. Students are prepared extremely well for the next stage of life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers have expert subject knowledge, which they use very effectively in their teaching. They are successful in making students highly aware of what they need to do to improve their performance and gain the highest results. Lessons are exceptionally well planned and include detailed activities to support less able students and extend the abilities of the most able students. Resources, including ICT, are used highly effectively and students are enabled to build successfully on previous learning. Teaching is interesting, stimulating and in many cases, inspiring. The great majority of students are absorbed by their learning and participate enthusiastically in class discussion as a result. Lessons move at a fast pace with a variety of activities to support students' different ways of learning and varying capabilities. Teachers have the confidence to stand back and let students become independent learners. They use probing questions to guide and stimulate rather than direct. Teachers observe carefully, listen well to and use the information to raise expectations, encourage greater effort and to support those who are having difficulty. Teachers raise students' aspirations and improve their progress effectively through challenging activities and give them the confidence to succeed. The marking and assessment of students' work provide very good guidance to help students to improve. Teachers use the information well when planning activities to suit those of different abilities. The working relationships between staff and students are pleasant and courteous. Students are conscientious and interested learners. They concentrate well, ask pertinent questions and show pride in their work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curricular provision is good with some outstanding aspects. It is innovative, rich, and varied. The impact of the college's media specialist status is very good, being well reflected in film-related projects such as 'animation' in mathematics and choreography in dance. The curriculum is regularly evaluated and is increasingly well tuned to students' needs, aptitudes and aspirations. The curriculum in Years 7 and 8 has been remodelled to provide broader areas of experience. As students move up the college, opportunities progressively widen. In Years 10 and 11 there are appropriate pathways and flexible combinations to help students develop and pursue the full range of their interests. However, there is currently insufficient vocational provision to cater for all students' needs. There is good continuity in the curriculum through effective links with the college's primary feeder schools. A small number of Year 10 students for whom the full range of courses is not appropriate are following an alternative curriculum that better meets their needs. The most able students have many opportunities to

develop their talents through enrichment and accelerated learning programmes. The good provision for students with learning difficulties enables them to progress as well as their peers. The quantity, quality and popularity of extra-curricular opportunities make a very good contribution to students' personal and academic development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. The college has a calm and happy atmosphere that supports students' academic achievement and personal development very well. The involvement of all students and their parents in identifying and reviewing personal learning targets is excellent. As part of this process, students have regular opportunities to air any concerns and they receive sensitive support, whether the problem is related to personal or academic matters. This supports their achievement extremely well. The college provides well for students with learning difficulties and has close links with a number of other agencies. However, targets in individual education plans are not always specific enough. Support for the most able students is highly effective. Their needs are fully understood and they are nurtured to ensure that they do as well as they can. Careers guidance is thorough and impartial. The college does all that it can to make sure students are kept safe. Child protection procedures are securely in place and all staff have received recent training. The college takes any hint of bullying or misbehaviour very seriously and acts quickly and decisively to remedy the situation.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding. There is excellent leadership by the principal, focused successfully on raising standards, improving provision through innovation and effective collaborative activities. There is an exceptionally clear and shared vision for the college which is ably and fully supported by senior and middle managers, staff and stakeholders. The college's mission to collaborate effectively has been translated into vigorous action, including the recent federation with a local school emerging from special measures. Although at an early stage, the impact of the federation on the other school is already apparent in improvements to the learning environment and the improved morale of many teachers. Performance management is exceptionally thorough and effective. There are rigorous systems of self-critical review that have been successful in securing improvements and identifying good practice. Lesson observation is extensive and effective. Inspectors' judgements on the quality of teaching and learning agreed closely with that of the college. Staff have the confidence to be self-critical and are very well supported in improving areas identified as needing development. Overall, the self-evaluation form accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the college; however, it did not provide as rigorously self-critical an analysis as the annual and triennial reviews regularly undertaken by the college. The college has made excellent progress in addressing the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. For example, weaknesses in the use of

assessment and the monitoring of students' progress have been eradicated and such use is now a significant strength. There is good promotion of equal opportunities. Inclusion strategies are effective in ensuring that students achieve as well as they can. Governors are well informed and supportive of the college's mission. They have a clear understanding of their role in monitoring and improving standards. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded through questionnaires are strongly supportive of the college. The college has an excellent reputation and standing in the local community. There is a very low turnover of teaching staff and morale is high among all staff. Funds and resources are managed effectively and the college provides excellent value for money.



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Earlier this week, a small team of inspectors visited your college. We met and talked with many of you and watched some of your lessons. We also met with your teachers and had letters from your parents and carers. This letter is to tell you about our findings and explain what we think the college does well and how it could be even better. Your college is providing you with an excellent education. Your teachers work extremely hard to plan and provide you with interesting lessons. They make sure that you are all included in every activity and that, whether or not you are particularly good at a subject, that you all do as well as you possibly can. You have a wide range of subjects to choose from, but we have asked the college to make sure that any of you who would prefer to study vocational subjects can do so. One of the college's main strengths is you. Your behaviour and attitudes are extremely good. When we met you, we noticed how confident and mature you were. You expressed your views clearly and with maturity. You have very clear ambitions for the future and are well informed about the choices you can make. In lessons, you pay attention to the teachers and work hard. You are very good at working both by yourselves and in teams. The college makes sure that you are all aware of how you can improve your work through personal learning plans and what targets you should aim for so that you can achieve the very best results possible. We have asked the college to check that those of you who have individual education plans are very clear about what your aims should be. You told us that there is very little bullying at the college and that you knew what to do and where to go for help if it happened. Remember that your teachers will always help you, and so tell them if you, or a friend, need help. I wish you well for the future and hope you are successful in whatever you want to do.