

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



5 March 2019

Mrs Sally Swann and Ms Trudy Read
Joint Headteachers
Parkside Academy
291 Spring Road
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP4 5ND

Dear Mrs Swann and Ms Read

Short inspection of Parkside Academy

Following my visit to the school on 5 February 2019 with John Mitcheson, HMI, and Clare Fletcher, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2016.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

The school caters for pupils who have a wide range of needs across its different sites. Given this breadth of need, the multi-academy trust was not well enough prepared to support the school when it opened as a new academy in 2016. Consequently, trustees and governors did not act quickly or incisively to ensure that leaders built on the standards identified in the previous inspection.

Recognising this, there has been much done to improve the quality of the trust oversight and leadership in the last 18 months. New trustees, a new chair and a permanent chief executive officer (CEO) have all been appointed. Guided steadfastly by the new CEO, the trust is now governing and supporting the school with a secure understanding about the strengths and weaknesses in the provision and are securing the necessary improvements.

On a day-to-day basis, pupils are generally very happy and positive about their school experience. Leaders have created a calm and orderly environment in the school. Pupils behave well. Relationships between adults and pupils are very well established and rooted in mutual respect. Pupils trust staff, and in turn, staff take good care of them.

Leaders, including the trustees, know that attendance, persistent absence and ensuring that more pupils access full-time education are areas requiring rapid improvement in the school. Moreover, leaders do not yet have a sharp enough understanding about the difference the additional funding they receive is making for disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The checks that you make before you recruit staff are appropriate and in line with statutory guidance. The trust makes appropriate checks on these statutory requirements.

You and your staff have created an ethos and culture of safety. Pupils appreciate the importance and value of different lifestyles, faiths and backgrounds. All pupils spoken to throughout the inspection stated that they feel safe.

Staff are well trained and know the signs of concern to look for in pupils. They make appropriate referrals to safeguarding leaders when they are concerned. Leaders are particularly adept at staying abreast of the safeguarding issues in the local community. Leaders work well with external agencies and medical staff in the hospital provision to ensure that vulnerable pupils get the right help when they need it.

You and staff understand the vital link between monitoring attendance and safeguarding pupils. There are systematic attendance checks on all pupils, including those pupils who are not routinely accessing education on site.

Inspection findings

- The trust, acknowledging its weaknesses in monitoring the quality of provision, has reorganised and recruited several new trustees over the last 18 months. The appointment of a permanent CEO is bringing greater rigour in the trust's work.
- The CEO has achieved a remarkable understanding about the quality of provision in a relatively short space of time. She and the joint headteachers are working systematically to address issues in the school in a sustained way. They refuse to resort to quick fixes, determinedly focused on bringing meaningful improvements.
- Under the new chairperson, the trust has taken on the direct governance of the school to oversee the improvements being made. The trust is using this opportunity to retrain and reorganise the role of the local governing body.
- The trust has an insightful understanding about the needs of pupils in the local community. It is starting to use the New Opportunity Funding to employ transition workers to support the most vulnerable pupils to re-engage in full-time education. This work is too new to evaluate its impact.
- Pupils who attend the Parkside site arrive with complex social, emotional and medical needs. Pupils at Lindbergh arrive at the school after experiencing turbulence in their previous schooling, and often have experienced, or are at risk

of, permanent exclusion. Given the wide variety of pupils' needs across the sites of the school, we reviewed how well the school is ensuring that pupils attend, behave and progress, given their varied starting points and needs.

- The new system for assessing pupils who are referred to the school provision has improved significantly since September. The 'one-point-of-referral' is also improving the local understanding with the local authority and other local schools about how best to meet pupils' needs.
- Pupils are effectively supported in the hospital provision to learn well. The leader works closely with medical professionals to ensure that all pupils receive high-quality provision between their care and treatment. The leader liaises closely with pupils' schools to ensure that there is continuity in the learning they receive, especially for those pupils who require this provision on a more recurrent basis.
- The rate of poor attendance and persistent absence is too high for pupils who attend both the Lindbergh and Parkside campuses. While some is related to unavoidable medical absences, this does not account for it all. Although staff monitor those who do not attend routinely, too many pupils are not accessing full-time provision or attending regularly enough. This inhibits pupils' ability to achieve and develop as successfully as they could.
- Leaders are reviewing the curriculum to increase pupils' access to full-time provision that meets their aspirations, interests and abilities. This includes alternative provision and tuition programmes. However, this work is in its early stages and is not yet impacting on the quality of learning for pupils.
- Pupils behave well across all the sites. They enjoy their learning and are appropriately supervised. Pupils interact with other pupils and staff in a positive way including during well-organised social times. Increasingly, older pupils are acting as good role models for younger pupils. Some pupils are also opting to take on wider responsibilities in the school community, such as through the school council.
- Leaders have identified that their systems for monitoring pupils' attendance, behaviour and learning lack focus. These are hindering leaders' ability to know precisely the impact they are having and where they need to better deploy their resources. They are implementing a new commercial system, in a careful and considered way.
- Leaders and trustees do not know the difference that the additional funding is making to disadvantaged pupils. While they are spending funding on activities designed to support pupils' specific needs, leaders are not checking whether these activities are making enough difference over time.
- On occasion, staff do not have high enough ambitions of what pupils can achieve. This includes when pupils are capable of developing greater independence. Leaders are using the development of their pastoral and academic curriculum as an opportunity to train staff to develop confidence in these areas.
- For those pupils who access the on-site learning more routinely, staff create a positive learning environment, where they celebrate pupils' successes. Pupils told inspectors that being at the school is improving their confidence.

- The school has not ensured that the government 'get information about schools' website contains the most up-to-date information about the provision in the school, most notably about the numbers of pupils who attend the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- further develop the curriculum provision so that more pupils access full-time education and attendance improves
- improve school systems for monitoring attendance, behaviour and learning so leaders have a sharper understanding about their impact and where they need to deploy resources more precisely
- evaluate the use of the additional funding on disadvantaged pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance more effectively
- address the inaccuracies on the 'get information about schools' government website so it is accurate with the most up-to-date information about the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kim Pigram
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors spoke with you both, the CEO and several other leaders and staff. I also met with the chair of the trust, another trustee and the chair of the local governing body. We visited classes with you across the sites: Parkside, Lindbergh and provision for pupils at Ipswich Hospital. We looked at pupils' work while we were in some of those lessons. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire to report on. However, inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the day, both in small groups formally and during lessons. We took account of three responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 17 staff responses. We reviewed a range of school documentation, including information related to safeguarding and pupils' progress.