

Inspection of a good school: Park Hall Academy

Water Orton Road, Castle Bromwich, Birmingham, West Midlands B36 9HF

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 May 2023

Outcome

Park Hall Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be a part of this vibrant and inclusive school. Staff have high expectations for pupils, and put their interests at the heart of all that they do. Pupils are friendly and respectful. They feel safe in school and know who to speak to if they have any worries.

Leaders have created a purposeful start to the school day which is based on the 'learning pride' behaviours of participation, respect, independence, determination and energy. Leaders 'meet and greet' pupils in the morning, check their uniform and equipment, and offer them a bagel. All of this sets pupils up well for the start to their day.

There is a range of extra-curricular activities for pupils to take part in, such as choir, dance and drumming. The interests of all pupils are taken into account. For example, clubs such as role playing games and chess are particularly well attended by all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Sixth-form students benefit from an enrichment programme and leadership opportunities. They are role models for their younger peers and organise events with them. This includes cultural events and fundraising for charities.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum. They have taken action to increase the number of pupils who complete the suite of subjects which form the English Baccalaureate. The curriculum builds on knowledge which pupils bring with them from Year 6.

Teachers are knowledgeable in the subjects they teach. They carefully select resources to ensure that the learning needs of all pupils are met. Most teachers regularly check that pupils understand the work. When pupils do not understand, most teachers will re-teach the information in a way that helps pupils better develop their understanding. However,

some teachers do not consistently check that learning is clearly understood before moving on.

Members of the SEND team quickly identify and assess pupils' needs. They work closely with parents and pupils to identify how to best support pupils' learning. This information is shared with staff. Staff then use strategies from the individual learning plans to adapt lessons so that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum. All of this means that pupils with SEND are well supported to achieve their personal best.

Pupils who struggle to read receive the help they need. Leaders have assessed pupils to identify what their individual learning needs are. Pupils then have extra classes tailored to improve their reading. This means that pupils are able to catch up quickly. The school library is well used at social times by pupils who want to work and those who want a quiet space to read. However, most pupils are not reading widely for pleasure. This means that an opportunity is missed to expand their range of experiences.

Pupils are well mannered and behave well. When pupils' behaviour falls short of the school's expectations, they are supported by staff, and receive the guidance they need to improve their behaviour. Teachers have created a calm and purposeful atmosphere in lessons. As a result, pupils apply themselves well to their work and have the confidence to share their ideas and answers. Leaders celebrate and reward positive behaviour, and this is well received by pupils. This includes rewards trips such as rock climbing and visits to the German Christmas markets.

The curriculum for pupils' wider development is comprehensive and varied. Pupils learn about topics such as healthy relationships, consent and healthy eating. The curriculum is adapted to reflect current issues, and recently pupils were taught about misogyny. Pupils enjoy 'culture day' where they learn and celebrate all the different cultures in the school. This helps them to be prepared for life in modern Britain.

The careers programme provides pupils with the advice and guidance they need to make decisions about their futures. There are work experience opportunities for pupils in Year 7 and Year 12. Leaders also organise visits to local colleges and invite employers into school so that pupils know of the opportunities available to them. As a result, pupils are prepared well for their next steps in education, employment and training.

Governors and trust executives have a clear awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have created a culture to raise standards so that pupils get the best possible deal. This is done particularly well with the collaboration of staff across all schools within the trust. For example, staff at the school recently shared the good practice of their sixth form with their other schools. Staff enjoy working at the school and appreciate the work that leaders have done to help manage their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have carried out appropriate checks on their staff to ensure they are suitable to work in a school. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. Leaders are aware of any local issues and share the potential risks with staff and pupils. This creates a culture of vigilance across the school.

Staff know their pupils well and quickly report any concerns they may have. Pupils will also speak to a trusted adult if they have worries of their own or if they are worried about their peers. The safeguarding team deals with any concerns quickly and effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, teachers do not routinely check that all pupils have a secure understanding of what they are learning before moving on. This means that errors and misconceptions are not picked up quickly and can persist. Leaders should ensure that teachers systematically check pupils' understanding so that they can spot potential gaps in knowledge and address them immediately.
- Leaders are still in the process of developing their approach to helping pupils read more widely and for pleasure. At present, not enough pupils are reading for enjoyment. Leaders should ensure that pupils have opportunities to read more widely in order to expand their horizons.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2017.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	135971
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10256994
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1263
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	160
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Dr Celia O'Donovan
Headteacher	Dr Toby Close
Website	www.parkhallschool.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	16 and 17 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses five registered alternative providers for some pupils.

Information about this inspection

- 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead and the careers lead.

- Inspectors held discussions with those responsible for governance, the school improvement partner and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, history, languages, performing arts and science. 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 reviewed the school's tutor programme. Inspectors also visited tutor time and reading interventions at the start of the day.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. Inspectors took account of responses to the pupil and staff surveys, as well as Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to behaviour, bullying and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment.

Inspection team

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Richard Wakefield

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Huw Bishop

Ofsted Inspector

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