

Inspection of an outstanding school: Park Community Academy

158 Whitegate Drive, Blackpool, Lancashire FY3 9HF

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 October 2023

Outcome

Park Community Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

The headteacher of this school is Gill Hughes. The school is part of the Sea View Trust which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Angela Holdsworth, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Martyn Jones.

What is it like to attend this school?

Park Community Academy (PCA) is a school where everyone is welcome. The school recognises pupils, including children in the early years, and students in the sixth form, as incredibly talented individuals. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school's tenacious approach to enabling pupils to overcome their barriers to learning helps them to thrive.

Pupils and staff diligently follow the 'PCA way'. This approach outlines the school's high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils learn to follow well-structured routines. Over time, pupils' behaviour improves considerably. This is clearly shown in the exemplary attitudes of older pupils.

Pupils receive a broad curriculum that meets their needs exceptionally well. Staff build strong relationships with pupils, parents and carers. Parents appreciate the wide range of support provided by the school which enables their children to excel. These effective relationships, coupled with the exceptionally well-designed curriculum, mean that most pupils achieve highly from their starting points.

Pupils enjoy a vast array of wider opportunities. Clubs include cheerleading, horticulture, fitness and cooking. Pupils spoke fondly of the school therapy dogs, Daisy and Molly. The school band and choir perform at concerts regularly.

Pupils benefit from residential visits that broaden their horizons. They excel in many sporting competitions. Pupils benefit from high-quality play opportunities at social times. Due to these activities, they are happy and well-prepared for life beyond school.

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

The school's curriculum is well organised and highly ambitious. The school has outlined what knowledge pupils must learn and by when. As well as delivering the academic curriculum, staff are highly focused on improving pupils' personal, social and emotional development, as they move from the early years to the sixth form.

As a priority, the school has focused on ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of pupils with increasingly complex SEND. For example, skilled staff use a range of highly effective communication strategies to enable pupils to learn new knowledge and skills. The curriculum is also successfully enhanced by the school's close work with specialists. The school's collaboration with specialists enables staff to individualise each pupil's education with skill and with the upmost care. This, alongside thorough assessment information, helps staff to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and any changes to their SEND.

The school supports staff to develop strong subject knowledge. Staff also provide activities that help pupils to learn the curriculum exceptionally well. For example, pupils routinely revisit important topics and concepts. Consequently, pupils improve their depth of knowledge in all subjects. For many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, this leads to valuable external accreditations. These qualifications enable pupils to achieve their future ambitions.

The curriculum in the post-16 provision has a first-class focus on students' academic and personal achievement. Students spoke highly of the school and the positive impact that it has had on their independence and preparation for adulthood.

The school has established a well-embedded phonics curriculum. Prior to starting this, pupils receive excellent help to develop their listening and attention skills. The school provides strong support for pupils who are at the early stages of reading, or who are developing their pre-reading skills. This continues for as long as required. Over time, pupils improve their ability to read and/or communicate with confidence.

Highly trained staff deploy effective strategies to help any pupils who need support to improve their behaviour. Pupils are very polite and care for each other. They hold doors open for adults and peers, and welcome visitors to their classrooms.

The school interacts regularly with families. Parents are fully appreciative of the range of workshops and coffee mornings on offer. These activities help them to understand the school's approach to developing pupils' reading and communication skills.

The school is determined that pupils will become responsible, resilient and successful citizens. Pupils elect their peers to a range of leadership roles. Head pupils and prefects promote the 'PCA way'. Eco warriors encourage their classmates to protect the environment.

The school provides pertinent careers information, advice and guidance. This includes work experience that is carefully matched to pupils' aspirations.

The school ensures that staff, including those new to teaching, quickly become part of the PCA team. Staff reported that their workload is considered carefully. They appreciate working across departments, and the trust. Staff are very proud to work at the school.

Despite the many strengths of the school, everyone is firmly committed to continuous improvement. Those responsible for governance have a secure understanding of their statutory responsibilities. Trustees and governors offer highly effective support and challenge to the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in May 2018.

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	140143
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10277409
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	328
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	46
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martyn Jones
Headteacher	Gill Hughes
CEO	Angela Holdsworth
Website	www.park.blackpool.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a special school which provides education for two to 19-year-old pupils with a wide range of SEND. Pupils' needs include: moderate and severe learning difficulties; complex learning difficulties; autism; communication and sensory impairment; and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Places at the school are commissioned by local authorities.
- The school operates on two sites. The main site caters for all year groups from the early years to Year 11. The second site, the Oracle, is for sixth-form students. It is located at 49 St Anne's Road, Blackpool FY4 2AP.
- The school is part of the Sea View Trust.

- Due to the growth of the school since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to senior leadership. This includes the appointment of a substantive headteacher in January 2021. A substantive deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher have also been appointed.
- The school uses seven registered alternative providers.
- 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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in: early reading and communication; personal, social, health and economic education; and performing arts. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector observed some pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The lead inspector also reviewed the science, physical education and mathematics curriculums. He spoke with leaders and evaluated some pupils' work.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no children in the Nursery class. A small number of children were in the Reception class. Inspectors considered the early years curriculum and welfare requirements through their inspection activities.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders throughout the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with two trustees from the Sea View Trust, including the CEO.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector spoke to a representative of Blackpool local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at social times and in lessons. They spoke with pupils to discuss their views of the school, their learning, and their behaviour and safety.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- The lead inspector met with the leaders responsible for SEND. He sampled some pupils' work across the curriculum and reviewed documents relating to their SEND.

- The lead inspector visited the sixth-form provision, the Oracle. He conducted a tour of the site, met with leaders, visited some lessons and spoke to a group of students.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text comments. Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents shared by school leaders, including the school improvement plan, the records of governing body and trust board meetings and reports from the external evaluation of the school.

Inspection team

Adam Sproston, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Edmondson

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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