School report

Parkside Community School

Boythorpe Avenue, Boythorpe, Chesterfield, S40 2NS

Inspection dates	2–3 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	**Requires improvement**	**3**
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' achievement has not been good enough since the last inspection. Despite improvements this year throughout the school, particularly in English and mathematics, not enough students are making good progress.
- Although teaching is improving, it is not yet consistently good in all subjects. Teachers do not always keep students interested and involved in lessons.
- The work set for different ability groups is sometimes too hard or too easy. This restricts the rate of students' progress and their attitudes to learning.
- Students do not have regular chances in subjects other than English and mathematics to practise and strengthen their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Teaching assistants are not all clear about how best to help the students allocated to them to make good progress.
- Until recently, leaders have not placed sufficiently rigorous emphasis on improving students' attendance quickly in order to help them achieve well and increase their chances of employment.
- Faculty and subject leaders, most of whom are relatively new to their posts, are not all yet holding teachers fully and effectively to account for students' achievement.
- The good and comprehensive skills of new leaders are not being utilised fully to strengthen teaching and achievement throughout the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Well-chosen staff appointments this year are leading to better teaching and stronger systems to check and improve the school's performance.
- Staff promote reading well throughout the school.
- The school's effective safeguarding practices ensure that all groups of students feel secure, safe and well cared-for when they are learning.
- Students' conduct around the school is good.
- The governing body is providing comprehensive and robust challenge to leaders in its determination to quicken improvements in teaching and achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed a wide range of teaching and learning, including through six joint observations with either the headteacher or with individual members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors talked with students during lessons and at break and lunch times, visited tutor time and watched individual students and small groups of students receiving additional help and guidance. They met formally with three groups of students to find out their views about the quality of education they receive at the school.
- The inspectors also held meetings with senior and subject leaders, members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at documentation about the school's work including information about the achievement of all groups of students. They checked the school's development plan, carried out a scrutiny of students' work with a senior leader, checked records of their attendance and behaviour and reviewed the school's policies to help keep them safe.
- In carrying out the inspection, the inspectors took into account the 10 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 32 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lynne Blakelock, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Geoffrey Dobbs	Additional Inspector
Elaine Hamilton	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than most secondary schools. The number of students has declined over recent years but increased by 10% in September 2014.
- Most students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium is well above average and increasing. The pupil premium is additional government funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- A small number of students in Key Stages 3 and 4 learn off-site to avoid exclusion. They participate in the 'Groundwork' project or attend Chesterfield College. A very small number learn at Chesterfield Community Farm or the Doughnut Creative Arts Scheme.
- The school works very closely with its feeder primary schools to prepare pupils for secondary education. It is in partnership with Shirebrook School, rated as outstanding by Ofsted, whose headteacher is a National Leader of Education.
- There have been many changes in staffing since the last inspection. Twenty-one teachers, including eight subject leaders have left and been replaced. The headteacher restructured the senior leadership team in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching as quickly as possible, and so quicken students' progress, by:
  - providing challenging activities that match closely to students' varying abilities
  - giving students opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects
  - ensuring that teaching assistants have the skills and training they need to provide effective support and guidance.

- Raise expectations in order to improve students' attitudes to learning and ensure their continued safety and well-being by:
  - applying the behaviour policy consistently and promptly in lessons to improve students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour
  - giving students more opportunities to take on responsibility throughout the school to develop their personal and social skills
  - stressing the importance of good attendance in helping students to learn as well as they can and to prepare them for employment.

- Strengthen the impact of leaders at all levels in raising achievement by making sure that:
  - all subject and faculty leaders hold staff effectively and fully to account for performance in their areas
  - senior leaders use the skills of the new leaders to strengthen teaching and leadership throughout the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management	requires improvement

- Although students' achievement is now improving throughout the school, leaders have taken too long to bring this about. The school's 2014 results show that students did not make enough progress and standards remained low. Prior to this year, weak teaching, particularly in English and mathematics, has held back students' attitudes to learning and their academic progress.

- The headteacher has taken decisive and tough actions to strengthen teaching which are now bearing fruit. Teachers who left have been replaced by effective teachers, including in English and mathematics, and by leaders who are turning the school round. Students are now making secure and quickening progress. The high expectations of staff, better match of examination courses to the students' needs and rigorous checking of students' performance have led to standards rising from Year 7 onwards.

- Leaders collect and analyse data about students' achievement half-termly and it is this data which has made it easier for staff to intervene and support students who are not on track to make at least expected progress. Extra help, such as classes after school, during weekends and in school holidays, is a key feature of Year 11 students' preparation for examinations. These classes are helping them to overcome gaps in their learning resulting from some poor teaching over time.

- The school knows there is more to be done before all groups of students achieve well. Nevertheless, the effective partnership work with an outstanding local school, including in checking the accuracy of its data about students' progress, and the sustained support of the local authority are enabling the school to accelerate its rate of improvement.

- The school is planning ahead well. It works closely with its main feeder schools to create common systems and expectations. Year 5 and 6 pupils from the closest primary school come over to Parkside each lunchtime to eat and to familiarise themselves with the school, its staff and practices.

- Most parents support the school's work and its direction. The staff are positive about the school's potential for further improvement and morale is good.

- The headteacher engenders both trust and accountability in her staff. She has restructured senior leadership to ensure that the achievement and well-being of all groups of students are thoroughly overseen. However, not all subject and faculty leaders hold staff effectively and fully to account for performance in their areas of responsibility. This is because some of them are still settling in to their roles.

- The leadership of teaching is improving quickly but is not fully effective in ensuring that teaching routinely promotes good progress. Senior leaders are not using the skills of the new leaders fully in order to strengthen teaching and leadership practices as quickly as possible throughout the school.

- Teachers' performance targets are helping the school to improve teaching more quickly because they are linked closely to students' rates of progress and are challenging. Teachers are given good support to improve their practices by leaders and by the school's partners.

- Gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and other groups of students are closing. However, they are not closing as quickly as required for students in Year 11 to catch-up, because other students are also making faster progress. Good leadership, which focuses very thoroughly on the appropriateness of the use if the funding, and its impact, ensures that there are no gaps lower down the school.

- The new leadership responsible for disabled students and those who have special educational needs has made good improvements in monitoring their progress. Support to match their individual needs is now well organised. Students lower down the school are making faster progress but in Key Stage 4, especially in Year 11, students' rates of progress are slower and reflect previous less focused management of this area.

- Leaders have not shown sufficiently high expectations for students' attendance. The new leader responsible has introduced incentives for good attendance, which are starting to make a difference. However, some students are not sufficiently aware of the link between attendance and progress, or potential employers' determination to offer jobs to students with good attendance records.

- The school takes its responsibility for safeguarding students very seriously and has good procedures to help to ensure that they stay safe. Leaders check the progress, behaviour and attendance of those who learn off-site very carefully and regularly. Vulnerable students are also cared for and nurtured sensitively so that they can settle to learning better.

- The curriculum has an appropriate emphasis on promoting students' literacy and numeracy skills, although staff do not always give students enough opportunities to practise them in subjects other than English and mathematics. Discrimination is not tolerated in any form and the school fosters good relationships in this friendly school. The small size of the school does restrict the range of courses at Key Stage 4. Together with the remaining weaknesses in teaching, this means that not all students have an equal chance to achieve success.

- Leaders integrate academic courses and knowledge and skills for life well, including regular careers information and guidance. They promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Students understand British values, including the importance of democracy in sustaining a fair society. The new 'Parkside Parliament' underlines democratic rights as well as responsibilities.

- **The governance of the school**:
  - The governors are now challenging the school's leaders and holding them effectively to account. Regular training and support from the local authority have helped this to happen. Governors have shown the skills and great determination to do whatever is needed to accelerate current improvements.
  - Governors check comprehensively for themselves the quality of the school's work, and as a result know its strengths and weaknesses well. They frequently check the progress they are making towards the targets in their action plan.
  - Records of governing body meetings demonstrate very probing questioning about many aspects of the school's work, particularly examination performance and any inconsistencies in students' progress. Governors constantly check that data show an improving picture and question leaders on a regular basis. They know that some teaching is not good enough to accelerate students' progress, partly from the 'learning walks' they conduct. They receive and discuss attendance data weekly in order to check the impact of the new strategies on attendance figures.
  - The governors know how pupil premium funding is spent and receive regular reports about its effectiveness. They are very aware of the importance of performance targets in improving teaching and refuse to agree to pay rises unless teachers meet all three of their targets. At the same time, they support teachers who need help to improve their teaching.
  - The governing body spends available money wisely and keeps a close eye on its impact. The governors' good strategic plans to address the fall in the number of students have allowed the school to move forward following a period of uncertainty.

The behaviour and safety of pupils — requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. A minority of students are inattentive when activities in lessons do not interest them or do not require them to work hard. Instead, they become restless and chatter. The situation is aggravated by a very few teachers not using the behaviour policy promptly. All students display very positive attitudes to learning when the work is interesting and expectations are high.

- There are fewer behavioural issues and fewer exclusions than previously, because sanctions are more effective and respected by the students. As a result, students' behaviour round the school is good. They behave sensibly and maturely in the dining hall, and on the corridors as they move from lesson to lesson. They keep the corridors and the site neat and free from litter, showing their respect for the school.

- Students like the change in uniform, which they requested. Several students said that they like wearing blazers, which makes them feel proud and gives them a sense of belonging to the school.

- Students have a small number of opportunities to take responsibility and to develop their personal skills, such as through helping in the library. They would like more opportunities to strengthen their involvement in the school and the development of skills for the next stage of their education or training. The recently established 'Parkside Parliament' is adding to students' involvement in the school's improvement. It is increasing their understanding of democratic principles and their importance in ensuring a fair and orderly society.

- Students who learn at other sites are behaving better than records show that they did when they learned on the school site. As a result, Year 11 students have completed their courses successfully.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement. Although most aspects are good, until recently leaders have not done enough to ensure that students' overall attendance is as high as it should be.

- Students feel safe because they know the site is secure. They also trust the staff to help them with their concerns.

- Parents and the staff agree that the school keeps the students safe. The students say that they know how to protect themselves from a range of unsafe situations, including cyber-bullying. They speak confidently of the prejudices that can lead to bullying, including homophobia.

- Students who learn at other sites are safe because the school checks frequently their attendance and behaviour.

- Leaders continue to focus on improving attendance rates, which they know are not increasing quickly enough to make sure that all students can make the best progress of which they are capable. They are tackling persistent absenteeism rigorously and rates have fallen but they are not as sharply focused on the attendance of other students.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies but is not yet good enough to lead to students' good progress over time. Lesson activities do not always interest and engage students. When teaching does not interest them, they do not concentrate fully and so they learn less well.

- Teachers do not always plan sufficiently carefully to help students to learn as well as possible. Their work is sometimes too easy for the most able students and this stops them developing the skills of which they are capable. Similarly, less able students sometimes find the work too hard because the language that is used is too complicated for them to read and understand.

- Nevertheless, teaching overall has improved considerably over the last year, especially in mathematics but also in English and numerous other subjects. This is because of good appointments and the very effective support provided to assist staff in strengthening their teaching.

- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are starting to learn better, especially in Key Stage 3, as leaders plan more carefully to cater for their individual needs and check regularly their progress. However, teaching assistants are not all confident in how best to support these students nor are they always clear about what is expected of them in lessons.

- The effectiveness of marking is improving quickly as teachers get used to the new policy. Many students are responding to the comments that teachers make, which help them to make quicker progress.

- Overall, students do not get sufficient opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills effectively in other subjects. Staff expectations of students' spelling, grammar and punctuation skills are not as high in most other subjects as they are in English. Mathematical skills are not often planned into learning in other subjects, so students do not get the chance to practise their skills or deepen their understanding as well as they could.

- Students have good relationships with their fellow students and with their teachers. This encourages them to try hard and to take risks with their learning.

- Some teaching is very skilful. For example, students in a Year 11 mathematics lesson responded with determination to interesting problem-solving challenges. They built up good knowledge and understanding of working out estimates of averages from frequency tables through the problem-solving activities. The students gained a clear insight into the task by considering the careful questions raised by the teacher and the resulting suggestions from other students.

- From Year 7 onwards, students read regularly and are strengthening their skills in understanding texts and the roles of characters. Less able readers are making good progress because teachers know what they need to be able to do better, and focus on improving these aspects of reading. Students in Year 7, who find reading hard, made good progress in picking out of the text of a Greek myth the positive characteristics of Orpheus.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Not enough students make good progress from their starting points in Year 7. Despite the improvements made this year, students still learn slowly when lesson activities do not interest them, or are too hard or too easy.

- Standards were well below national averages in 2013 and 2014. The proportion of students achieving five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, was well below average in 2014. Not enough students, particularly boys, disabled students and those who had special educational needs, made at least nationally expected progress in English, mathematics, languages, history or music during their time in the school.

- This year the improvements in teaching, better use of data and the thorough checking of progress by leaders have combined to bring about improvements in students' progress throughout the school. Students' work over time shows that this is most consistently the case in Key Stage 3 and in Year 11.

- Boys' progress has also quickened, including in Year 11, where the proportion making expected progress is on track to be close to last year's average in English and mathematics by the end of the year. Boys like the greater opportunities for problem solving, which encourage them to try hard and keep them interested.

- This year the school is on track to reach the government floor standards. Attainment is rising in history. Students achieve well in information and communication technology and geography, where teaching is good.

- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs varies, particularly in Year 11 because in the past the school has not catered well for them. Some students are on track to make expected progress but not all. Lower down the school, progress is quickening due to better identification of the support students.

- The most able students do not always achieve as well as they could. This is because their work does not promote wider skills or give them sufficient chances to solve problems and critically evaluate, in depth, what they are learning. In English and mathematics there is an emerging, stronger picture of achievement.

- Students who have not reached the expected standards in English and mathematics by the end of primary school receive specific help to master these skills. Students' entry levels into Year 7 vary but last year were well below average. Although only a minority of students reached the expected standards by the end of year, most made good progress.

- Some students continue to struggle with reading. The school provides all students in Key Stage 3 with many opportunities to read across different subjects, including in form time, and tracks their progress regularly to determine whether additional support is needed.

- The school enters students early for a small number of examinations and 48% of students have already achieved A* to C grades in two subjects. The school is ensuring that the most able students are achieving the best grade of which they are capable.

- Disadvantaged students have not made as much progress as other students in the school, or nationally, in the past. Over the last two years the gap in their attainment in English and mathematics has widened. In 2014, disadvantaged students in Year 11 were over a grade behind their classmates in English and nearly two grades behind other students nationally. In mathematics, they were just over a grade behind their classmates and one and a half grades behind other students nationally.

- Disadvantaged students in Year 11 are currently making faster progress than in previous years. However, their progress is still not fast enough to catch up with other students, who are also making faster progress. Their attainment is set to be 10% higher than last year but the school knows there is still too big a gap and their progress still requires improvement. However, there is no gap in the rates of progress in Years 7 and 8 because there are better systems to check and immediately address any gaps in attainment that teachers identify.

- Students in Key Stage 4 who are taught at other places achieve success in the qualifications for which they have studied. Records show this is due to improved attitudes, better attendance and an interest and enthusiasm for what they are learning.

- At the end of Year 11, most students go on to sixth form education, further education or training.

What inspection judgements mean

School Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors. A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.

School details

Unique reference number	112961
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	462027

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	414
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jean Horton
Headteacher	Kam Grewal-Joy
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2013
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