

Inspection of Parkfields Middle School

Park Road, Toddington, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU5 6AB

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is James Hughes. This school is part of Pyramid Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Steve Kelly, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Owen Flack.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Parkfields Middle School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged the predecessor school, also called Parkfields Middle School, to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at Parkfields Middle School. They have positive relationships with adults. Pupils are safe. They get a lot of help with their well-being. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get strong support. They are fully included in the life of the school. This includes those in the specialist unit for deaf children.

Pupils learn a well-planned curriculum. This helps them build up what they know. They enjoy learning. For example, pupils describe their science experiments with enthusiasm.

There is a calm and purposeful focus in lessons. Pupils behave well. They enjoy being active with their peers at breaks. There is no culture of bullying because adults are quick to address any concerns before they grow.

Pupils enjoy the rich extra-curricular experience on offer. There is a wealth of things for pupils to do. They participate in a range of clubs through the 'Challenge Programme', such as coding, engineering and Latin. Pupils praise the quality of sporting activities. They plan and organise events themselves, for instance the arts festival. Pupils run their own newsletter and radio station. They have many opportunities for leadership roles. Consequently, pupils' ideas and views get heard. These opportunities help them develop their confidence and independence.

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

The school has designed the curriculum carefully. Subject leaders identify what pupils need to know to be ready for their next stage. The curriculum outlines in considerable detail what pupils should learn to ensure this. For example, the reading programme in English builds pupils' understanding step-by-step of difficult content, such as archaic language. As a result, pupils make strong progress in most areas. This was not reflected as well as it might have been in the Year 6 outcomes in 2023. The school has since reviewed its provision effectively to support pupils to achieve well.

Teachers mostly deliver the curriculum well. They explain and model learning clearly. Adults help pupils make regular connections with previous learning so that they remember it. This helps pupils develop detailed knowledge. However, sometimes teachers do not check pupils' understanding as effectively as they could. In these cases, pupils have gaps in their learning that do not get fully addressed. On occasion, pupils move on to new learning without the secure foundation they need.

In most instances, staff adapt the curriculum so that it meets pupils' needs. This is especially the case regarding pupils with SEND. The school builds up a detailed picture of these pupils' needs so it identifies them accurately. Staff are then trained to meet these needs. This means pupils with SEND receive precise and skilful support. As a result, they do well. However, at times teachers do not have as high

expectations of what some of their other pupils will learn. In these cases, teachers do not adapt the curriculum as successfully. For instance, some pupils find the work too easy and get bored. These pupils do not develop the depth of knowledge they could.

The school prioritises reading. Pupils still learning to read get the help they require. This means they develop fluency, and they understand learning better.

The school has high standards for behaviour and attendance. Pupils respond to these well. Leaders deal with the underlying causes of any misbehaviour. Where sanctions are needed, these are used well. Therefore, incidents are not common. Attendance is high.

The curriculum supports personal development effectively. Pupils receive well-considered education about future careers. The school exploits local links well so that they meet employers and providers. Pupils learn about healthy relationships in an age-appropriate way, such as about puberty. As a result, they discuss their views maturely.

Governance is a strength. The trust and governors have a clear vision for the school. They monitor provision closely. Governors challenge where needed. Equally, they support leaders' work helpfully, such as adding resource for interventions in mathematics. Governors and leaders create a team ethos in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers at times do not check learning as systematically and effectively as they might. This means they do not address gaps well enough during lessons. Therefore, pupils move on to new learning before securing the knowledge they require. The school should ensure that teachers get the guidance and support they need to check pupils' grasp of key knowledge.
- Teachers sometimes do not adapt learning in a way that enables pupils to learn effectively. This means that some pupils do not build up the deep knowledge they need. Leaders should ensure teachers have high expectations for all pupils' learning. They should help teachers to plan learning that it is adapted to pupils' needs so that pupils make the progress of which they are capable.

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 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	147804
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10295125
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	465
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Owen Flack
Headteacher	James Hughes
Website	www.parkfieldsschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened on 1 June 2020 as part of the Pyramid Schools Trust. Pyramid Schools Trust consists of seven local schools. These are four lower and two middle schools, and one upper school.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2019. The whole senior leadership team is new since the predecessor school was previously inspected, in March 2019.
- The school has a specialist provision for up to eight deaf children. The provision is funded by Central Bedfordshire local authority.
- The school uses three unregistered 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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 met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, and other senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with five governors, including the chair. The lead inspector also met with trust leaders, including the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, science and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, met with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- As part of evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors met with leaders, governors, staff and pupils. Inspectors scrutinised the school's single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. They considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including curriculum plans, policies and documentation for behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments submitted by parents during the inspection. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Cindy Impey	Ofsted Inspector
David Piercy	Ofsted Inspector

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