

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



29 March 2016

Mrs Susan Booth
Headteacher
Parkside Complex Needs School, supported by Parkside Community Trust Norwich
College Road
Norwich
Norfolk
NR2 3JA

Dear Mrs Booth

Short inspection of Parkside Complex Needs School, supported by Parkside Community Trust Norwich

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 2016, 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 the school was judged to be outstanding in October 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained and further developed the excellent quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Parkside School is a school that never stands still. You and the staff are constantly striving to be better than your best. Pupils love coming to school in the morning. They are proud of their school so are highly motivated to improve their learning and behaviour. When asked to describe their school in one a word, a group of pupils offered, 'awesome!', 'cool' and 'happy'. One pupil described the school as a 'superstar' because that is the top award that you give for work and behaviour in school. Pupils love the many trips that you organise for them. For example, one pupil thought that dressing up as a dragon on a recent museum visit was 'brilliant'. Older pupils are really appreciative of the opportunity that you give them to visit Spain to try out their language skills.

Parents are ecstatic about the school. They support you 100%, saying that the school is 'a wonderful place' where 'children are at the top of the agenda every day'. They describe the progress that their children make from when they start at Parkside as 'amazing'. One parent, talking about her severely autistic child who finds change of any kind very challenging, said 'If we moved something a tiny amount at home she would go mad!' After a term at Parkside, this same child 'is more relaxed and can accept change more easily'. A very small number of parents

who contributed to Parent View (Ofsted's online survey), or sent free text messages, expressed concerns about homework or not receiving information about their child's progress. Inspectors looked into their concerns and found no evidence to support these concerns.

The positive impact that you have on the wider community is outstanding. A consultant paediatrician describes the school as, 'an invaluable resource that has transformed the way pupils are supported to go into the world as young adults'. The inspection team also found that you prepare young people exceptionally well for the next stage of their life. The practical, hands-on advice and experience that they receive, for example in the café, means that their career aspirations are grounded in reality. Pupils know what they can do and know what it means to go to work. The recent appointment of a lead person responsible for 'transitions' has ensured that pupils move successfully into the school and seamlessly from one class to the next. The very close working relationship with the special needs coordinators from colleges enables learners to move easily from school to college. One coordinator told inspectors that 'students thrive because of the depth of preparation they receive'.

Staff are thrilled to be working at Parkside. They are fully involved in every decision and development at the school. They are brimming with good ideas about how to make learning and behaviour even better. They are passionate about improving pupils' learning and ensuring that they become confident, well-rounded adults who make a positive contribution to their community. You have recognised that the priorities in your improvement plan do not always do justice to the new approaches that your staff invent to improve learning and progress further.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding procedures and practice at Parkside are exemplary. You have many vulnerable young people in the school and you ensure that they are safe from the moment they leave their homes in the morning to when they arrive back at home, because you provide detailed training for staff, including bus drivers and escorts. However, you are also extremely skilled at enabling pupils to learn the life skills that they need to keep themselves safe. Parents value the training that they have received about internet safety. Pupils have also taken on board their training and recognise, for example, that chat rooms are to be avoided.

Record keeping systems are meticulous; so much so that the local authority legal department praised the high quality of information that you give them. Behaviour incidents are recorded with equal precision, and staff are clear when a pupil needs to be physically prevented from hurting others or themselves. It is also clear that teachers and support staff understand how to help pupils before behaviour becomes difficult to manage.

Inspection findings

- You and the executive headteacher run a tight ship. Since the last inspection, you have maintained the excellent standards that pupils achieve

and the outstanding education that they receive because you, and senior and middle leaders monitor everything with precision and great attention to detail. You have fully addressed the area for improvement from the last inspection. You and the staff know the pupils exceptionally well because you are always talking about their learning and welfare needs.

- You have highly effective systems for tracking pupils' often very small steps of progress. For example, the beautifully presented learning journeys in lower school illustrate the excellent progress that pupils make from their wide range of starting points. You make sure that teachers' evaluations of pupils' achievements are accurate because you check these with other special schools and with external experts. You are currently improving how you evaluate learning with other special school leaders, devising a more detailed assessment system than is currently available.
- You are constantly looking for more effective ways through which to meet your pupils' very individual needs. You work to great effect with a wide range of professionals to make sure that pupils receive the specialist programmes and therapies that they need. There are many amazing success stories, but one that is particularly impressive is about a pupil who started at Parkside with no spoken language, refused to go into class and hid under tables. Recently, that same pupil went on the trip to Spain, chose to go into a shop and spoke to the assistant in creditable Spanish, making it very clear what he wanted to buy. He was also able to give the correct money and check the change.
- The café situated in the centre of Norwich has been a phenomenal success. This is run by the Parkside learners, with support, as a business with challenging weekly financial targets to meet. All aspects of learners' work and learning are assessed, and you and your staff have very high expectations for what they can achieve. You and the staff also make it crystal clear to learners that, although they may not end up getting a job at the café, the skills that they learn can be used in any workplace.
- The café has become more than a successful business. It provides a service to the city as a safe refuge for vulnerable young people from similar schools, who want to sit and chat with their friends in a friendly environment. Parents meet at the café and form self-help groups to support each other to better understand their children's special needs. All the school staff who work at the café, including the chef, are trained to give advice and guidance to students and parents.
- Your travel-independence programme is a model of excellence. As a result, learners are able to get themselves out and about easily and with confidence. 'We go out for walks, hop on buses and we can get in and out of the city easily and safely.'
- Governors understand the school exceptionally well. Most have been in the job since the last inspection and some before this. They have seen the

school grow, develop and improve over time. They are exceptionally challenging, which ensures that the many new ideas flowing from creative teachers and senior leaders are carefully analysed before they are put in place and stringently monitored once they are in place. Governors recognise that improvement plans do not always capture the innovative improvement ideas that teachers are putting in place.

- The Parkside Community Trust continues to give excellent support to the school and to the wider special and mainstream school community in Norwich. The local authority speaks very highly of the outreach work that you provide for other schools. The Trust also allows you and the executive headteacher to work on exciting and highly worthwhile new projects such as setting up a new school for young people with autism.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvement planning captures the effective new approaches devised by teachers to improve pupils' welfare and progress.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors observed eight lessons or parts of lessons, almost all of which were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to other lessons and looked at pupils' work and heard them read. The inspection team held meetings with pupils, parents, governors, trustees, local authority representatives, therapists, consultants and the school staff, including senior and middle leaders. Inspectors took account of 21 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) including 10 free text messages and 16 questionnaires completed by staff. The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's planning for improvement, safeguarding documentation and current pupil performance information.