

Inspection of Ellesmere Port Church of England College

164 Whitby Road, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 6EA

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 March 2023

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils told inspectors that this school is a happy and safe place to learn. Pupils are proud of their achievements. The celebratory 'Fantastic Fridays' are popular with most pupils. New pupils are well supported when they join the school. This helps them to settle in well.

Pupils rise to leaders' high expectations for their learning and behaviour. Pupils get on well together. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. Most lessons are calm and purposeful. Leaders deal with incidents of bullying effectively. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. This contributes to their good achievement over time.

Sixth-form students are excellent role models for younger pupils in the school. They take on positions of responsibility, including running the student leadership team. Pupils across Years 7 to 11 are motivated to take full advantage of the wider experiences that are offered through the trust award scheme. For example, pupils enjoy the murder mystery and rock climbing clubs.

Pupils learn about local and national issues through the curriculum. They value and respect the different groups in their community. They support the local food bank and raise awareness of problems such as human trafficking through school events.

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

Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum. For example, leaders are further developing the modern foreign languages curriculum to increase the number of pupils completing the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects at key stage 4. In most subjects, leaders' curriculum thinking is clear and coherent. Learning is well organised so that teachers know the essential knowledge to teach and when this should happen. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well across the curriculum.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They benefit from regular subject-specific training. As a result, they are able to explain new concepts clearly to pupils. In most subjects, teachers have effective strategies in place to check what pupils know and remember. This helps pupils to retain important subject knowledge.

In a few subjects, leaders have not identified the important knowledge for pupils to learn. In these subjects, some pupils have gaps in their prior learning. Teachers do not identify and address these gaps effectively enough. In these subjects, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

The sixth form is small in number. However, the curriculum remains broad for all students. Leaders have made considerable improvements to the subject curriculums for sixth-form students. Moreover, they have ensured that lessons in the sixth form are personalised to meet the needs of each student, including those with SEND.

Current students have benefited from these changes. The published outcomes for the previous cohorts of key stage 5 students do not reflect these recent improvements.

Pupils with SEND learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Leaders identify pupils' additional needs effectively. Teachers receive helpful information and training so that they can support the needs of pupils with SEND well.

Leaders promote reading effectively across all year groups. Leaders have established a library that provides a purposeful space for reading and associated extra-curricular activities. Sixth-form students act as reading buddies for younger pupils. Pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge when they start at the school are identified quickly. These pupils receive appropriate support to catch up so that they become confident and fluent readers.

Pupils typically behave well in lessons and around the school. That said, on occasion, there is some low-level disruption in lessons. Teachers address this swiftly so that pupils can learn without interruption. Some pupils do not attend school as often as they should. These pupils miss out on important learning.

Leaders have designed their 'Be More' curriculum to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about what makes a healthy relationship and how to keep themselves safe. Pupils benefit from effective careers information, education, advice and guidance. This helps them to make informed decisions about their next steps.

Leaders provide a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils and students. Teachers broaden the experiences of pupils and students through local and international visits, including a planned trip to Hong Kong. Leaders ensure that these opportunities are available to all pupils.

The governors and trustees are experienced and well equipped to provide high levels of challenge and support to leaders. Most staff feel that leaders are mindful of their workload and supportive of their well-being. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have identified local safeguarding risks. Pupils and students are taught about these in an age-appropriate way. Pupils and students learn how to keep themselves safe, including when using social media and in the community.

Leaders and staff know their pupils, students and families well. Teachers are trained to identify any safeguarding concerns. Leaders have effective systems in place for staff to report and record any concerns. They work closely with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils and families receive timely help and support if necessary.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not identified the essential knowledge that pupils should learn and when this should happen. This means that pupils do not build their subject knowledge as well as they should in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that they are clear about what they want pupils to learn and by when to allow pupils to learn more successfully.
- In some subjects, leaders have not ensured that teachers effectively identify and address gaps in pupils' prior knowledge. This means that some pupils in key stages 4 and 5 are not prepared well for new learning. Leaders should ensure that gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified and addressed to enable pupils to learn and remember more of the curriculum.
- Some pupils do not attend school as often as they should. These pupils miss out on learning. Leaders should ensure that these pupils attend school more regularly.

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	146742
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10267825
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	607
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	65
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Chris Hampshire
Principal	Cath Green
Website	www.epcollege.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Ellesmere Port Church of England College converted to a new academy in a new academy trust in December 2018. When its predecessor school, University of Chester CE Academy, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The school is part of the Frank Field Education Trust.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Chester. The most recent section 48 inspection of the predecessor school took place in June 2017.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils and students in Years 7 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.

- 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.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, science, history and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils and students about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' and students' work.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders and other members of staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the board of trustees and representatives of the local governing body. The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the Diocese of Chester.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and students from Years 7 to 13 about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' and students' behaviour during lessons and breaktimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation document, leaders' improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' and students' behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding and scrutinised the single central record. Inspectors considered leaders' safeguarding processes and procedures. Inspectors discussed matters relating to safeguarding with pupils, students and staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff, pupils and students.

Inspection team

Eleanor Overland, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sheldon Logue	Ofsted Inspector
Sanjay Patel	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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