

School inspection report

21 to 23 April 2026

Parkside House School

Station Road

Backworth

North Tyneside

NE27 0AB

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	4
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	4
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	5
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	6
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	10
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	11
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	12
SAFEGUARDING	13
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	13
SCHOOL DETAILS	14
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	15
INSPECTION DETAILS	16

Summary of inspection findings

1. When making decisions, leaders prioritise pupils' social and emotional wellbeing and mental health. The proprietor body and local governing committee oversee the school's self-evaluation and development planning and issue effective challenge to leaders to assure that the Standards are met. Staff, leaders and the proprietor body take every opportunity to enhance, and fully embrace, 'the Parkside way' to support pupils in being safe, kind and ready to learn.
2. Leaders implement a curriculum that meets the diverse range of needs of pupils. Extra-curricular activities, known as 'enrichment', broaden pupils' experiences and enable them to see practical applications of what has been taught in lessons, as they learn to be active within their world through exploring nearby urban, rural and coastal environments. Teachers tailor the content and style of lessons so that pupils learn effectively. However, leaders and teachers do not consistently identify areas of weakness or gaps in pupils' learning across all subjects, and where they could be even more effective in supporting pupils' learning.
3. Many pupils have had extended periods of absence in their previous schooling. Leaders and staff create a warm, vibrant environment that welcomes pupils from the start of the day. Regular communication between staff and with parents and carers quickly identifies any barriers to pupils' success and supports pupils to overcome any concerns or worries quickly. Teachers work patiently and supportively with pupils to 'connect, co-regulate and co-reflect'. They engage with families to encourage pupils to value their education and attend regularly. As a result, over time, pupils learn to regulate their emotions, attend well and engage in the school community enthusiastically.
4. Leaders and staff ensure that pupils are supported to develop effective strategies that will support them on their pathway to adulthood. For example, teachers encourage pupils to recognise how they can contribute to both their school community and to wider society. Pupils develop their financial awareness and entrepreneurship through designing, costing and manufacturing a range of products for sale at a summer fair in order to make a profit. Pupils develop a thorough understanding of important British values and systems. For example, teachers provide a range of opportunities for pupils to make collaborative decisions through casting votes, thus emphasising the significance of democracy. These include electing members of the school council, choosing fancy dress themes for a party and participating in elections in the wider community, such as the selection process of the North Tyneside Youth Mayor and Youth Parliament.
5. Leaders and staff are knowledgeable and well trained in safeguarding. As a result, they respond appropriately and confidently to any concerns raised. Leaders carry out all necessary safer recruitment checks on all adults before they commence work at the school. Details of these are recorded in a single central record of appointments (SCR). There were administrative errors in the record at the start of the inspection. These were rectified while inspectors were on site.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- develop assessment systems so that teachers can identify precise gaps in all subjects and tailor support which enables pupils to make the progress of which they are capable
- ensure that all pre-recruitment checks are recorded accurately in the school's single central record of appointments.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

6. Leaders prioritise the wellbeing of pupils, promoting the school's aim to create a positive, respectful and supportive school environment in which every pupil can thrive. They use an array of relevant and up-to-date information to make informed decisions about how to improve provision for pupils. For example, leaders' detailed evaluation of the school is informed by regular 'focus fortnight' themed observations and staff discussions. This results in thoughtful development planning and continuous improvements which reflect the evolving needs of the diverse pupil population.
7. The proprietor body ensures that the advisory governors are experienced, knowledgeable and skilled in their roles. They undertake a range of activity, including meetings which are well informed through various plans, reports and presentations supplied by leaders for evaluation and discussion. Governors provide effective challenge to leaders to ensure that they are taking all reasonable action to secure the best opportunities for pupils. Governors work closely with the proprietor body to ensure that information is shared effectively, and any required support is put in place.
8. Leaders and governors have a shared understanding of the risks that could affect pupils and ensure that detailed measures are in place to mitigate these. They implement thorough risk assessments effectively and review them regularly to ensure they remain relevant. These include bespoke documentation for individual pupils. There is also an array of risk assessments for off-site activities, such as the school's diverse programme of enrichment experiences which include visits to the coastline, working with animals and participating in a variety of sports including trampolining, swimming and golf. Leaders assess risks associated with the school site, such as the classrooms, cookery activities, the therapy dog and the external environment. Staff are well trained in the processes of identifying and mitigating risk. They implement leaders' approaches to managing risk as intended.
9. Leaders maintain appropriate links with local authorities, including required liaison concerning pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plans), the escalation of safeguarding matters when necessary and the communication of details of pupils whose absence may give cause for concern, or who join or leave the school at non-standard transition points.
10. Leaders implement an appropriate policy for the handling of complaints. They maintain suitable records that detail how the school investigates and attempts to resolve each matter. Additionally, tutors communicate with parents and carers regularly, ensuring that any concerns are resolved efficiently and often on an informal basis.
11. Leaders make effective arrangements to provide required information to the parents and carers of pupils and prospective pupils, much of which is through the school's helpful and informative website. Parents and carers receive two detailed reports on their child's progress and achievements each year. Leaders provide opportunities, such as consultation evenings, for these reports to be discussed.
12. A thorough and detailed accessibility plan outlines measures taken by the school to ensure physical and curricular access to all areas. Thorough and informative, it combines with the prevention of discrimination to ensure that the school complies with the Equality Act 2010.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

13. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

14. Leaders have planned the curriculum carefully to support pupils to gain essential knowledge and skills over time. Many pupils arrive at the school after periods of absence in their previous schooling. They have gaps in their foundational knowledge and understanding. Leaders ensure that the curriculum provides a thorough and well-sequenced approach to supporting pupils to develop important skills in reading, writing, speaking and mathematics. Leaders have also thought carefully about the wider curriculum, and the creative ways in which they can engage pupils in this learning. The curriculum provides an array of well-chosen practical experiences and visits to the local community through the enrichment curriculum. This aims to develop pupils' social skills and prepare them for successful transition to adulthood.
15. Teachers use a wide range of high-quality and well-considered resources to make learning accessible to pupils. They use questioning skilfully to support pupils to revise, refine and extend their ideas. For example, when exploring the colour wheel, pupils are encouraged to predict what will happen when different colours are mixed. In English, teachers challenge pupils to use their existing knowledge of explaining King James' influence on Shakespeare's depiction of the supernatural. Teachers use an array of strategies to check on how well pupils are faring and ensure that they are learning effectively.
16. Pupils learn to apply their learning in practical ways and develop a more independent, thorough understanding about how to successfully engage in the local community. For example, pupils apply their learning in mathematics to calculate money and pay for goods when going on a visit to the local shops. Teachers use visits to parks, the beach or museums to reinforce learning in science and geography. On these occasions, pupils observe animals and birds, investigate different points on the coastline or research local history related to coalmining.
17. Leaders use a wide range of information to determine the most appropriate curriculum and teaching approaches for pupils. This ensures that pupils successfully access and gain meaningful qualifications and accreditation such as unit awards, entry level certificates and functional skills qualifications in a range of subjects, as well as BTECs and GCSEs. They go onto highly appropriate next steps in education, training and employment. Leaders and teachers assess pupils' performance and evaluate their progress routinely. However, they do not use this information precisely to identify the specific areas in which pupils are underperforming in some subjects. When this happens, teachers do not provide precise support to pupils to catch up in their learning.
18. Teachers provide pupils with constant guidance and feedback to acknowledge and celebrate their progress. Pupils value teachers' suggestions for how their thinking can be extended and their next steps. When pupils demonstrate characteristics of being safe, kind or ready to learn, teachers reward them with 'WOW' vouchers which reinforce pupils' self-esteem and are highly prized. Pupils typically engage enthusiastically in their learning.
19. Leaders identify and support the linguistic needs of a small number of pupils in the school who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Leaders make appropriate arrangements, such as the use of additional adults in the classroom and the application of visual signs and flashcards, to ensure pupils can access the curriculum effectively.

20. Leaders use a range of screening tools and baselining checks to fully understand pupils' needs when they first join the school. For example, they use the school's speech and language specialist to assess and recommend any additional needs and strategies that staff need to use. Leaders ensure that staff are effectively and routinely trained in strategies that support pupils' needs. This ensures that staff remain constantly well informed and are appropriately skilled. Parents, carers, pupils, staff and external professionals work collaboratively to review and adapt provision.
21. Teachers run a variety of extra-curricular clubs in a range of areas which change throughout the academic year. These give pupils the opportunity to discover new interests and share existing ones with their friends. Opportunities include craft, dog walking, cheerleading, creative writing and hair and beauty.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

- 22. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

23. Leaders and teachers create a welcoming and harmonious environment in which pupils are valued as individuals. Pupils appreciate how they are greeted warmly by staff at the start of each day. They value that teachers use strategies to help them assess how they are feeling or 'mood-check' so that the day gets off to a good start. Twice-daily staff briefings ensure that teachers share up-to-date information and provide timely support to pupils. This vigilance, care and attention to detail reassures pupils and helps them to develop their self-esteem and confidence in having a positive school experience.
24. Many pupils join the school after periods of extended absence from education. Leaders work closely with pupils and their families to identify and break down barriers to pupils' regular attendance. Frequent communications between staff, parents, carers and pupils mean that issues are often resolved quickly. Pupils learn to celebrate their own and their classmates' attendance. Various initiatives, such as the 'in it to win it' prize draw and a 'donut café' celebrate pupils' improvement in attendance and reinforces pupils' understanding of the importance of being in school. These steps are successful. Pupils' attendance typically improves over time, aided by their increased feelings of confidence and security at being in the school environment.
25. Well-trained staff help pupils to understand and regulate their emotions and behaviours. Leaders provide staff with a range of strategies and techniques. Staff use these approaches with consistency and adeptness, creating a calm and effective approach to dealing with any incidents that occur. Over time, pupils learn to connect, co-regulate and co-reflect with increasing independence. Pupils appreciate that their actions have consequences and realise that they sometimes need to apologise and make amends for inappropriate conduct, which they do successfully. Leaders monitor pupils' conduct, including incidents of bullying. They maintain detailed logs which are regularly scrutinised to identify patterns and alert staff to situations where pupils need additional help or guidance. Leaders work closely with parents and carers to ensure effective communication and approaches in supporting pupils.
26. Teachers deliver a programme of lessons in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) which is structured around themes such as 'healthy me' and 'being me in my world'. The PSHE programme includes elements of relationships and sex education (RSE) which covers national requirements and is planned and delivered by teachers in a bespoke manner. Teachers work closely with pupils and their parents to co-produce how to best ensure that the programme supports pupils' individual needs. Pupils' understanding is appropriately assessed, and teachers source feedback after each course to inform their future planning.
27. Leaders arrange a variety of ways for pupils to promote their physical health. A well-planned physical education (PE) and enrichment programme engages pupils in an array of physical activities and sport, such as basketball, tag rugby, trampolining and horse riding. Pupils understand the components of a balanced diet and are encouraged to make appropriate choices of food at lunchtime which include various selections from a salad bar alongside cooked products and a choice of vegetables.
28. Teachers encourage pupils to care for their emotional wellbeing and mental health, and the feelings of others. Through PSHE lessons, pupils are taught about ways in which social media and mobile

phone use can be unhealthy for their wellbeing, and how to manage these effectively. They are taught about the importance of sleep to their mental health. Teachers encourage pupils to use techniques of quiet reflection and contemplation in lessons when appropriate. They encourage pupils to reflect on characters' decision-making in the literature that they read together. Leaders complement these with a weekly programme of bespoke focus areas to develop pupils' spirituality and sense of culture, ranging from autism awareness to Makaton, animals in society and Easter. When needed, specialist professionals, such as therapists and counsellors, support pupils on a one-to-one or small group basis.

29. Well-trained leaders ensure that health and safety requirements, including those related to fire risk, are appropriate and that premises are well maintained. Suitable accommodation for first aid and the medical treatment of pupils is in place. Pupils are supervised appropriately throughout the school day. Leaders' internal maintenance checks are complemented by thorough oversight from the proprietor body, governors and external specialists.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 30. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

31. Leaders and teachers develop pupils' appreciation of how they can make positive contributions in society, through the teaching in the curriculum and visits to a wide range of places as part of the enrichment programme. Pupils take part in opportunities to raise money for charities of their choice and discover how their work can improve the lives of others, such as making Christmas decorations for a care home. Pupils become increasingly familiar and independent in accessing the local community, such as beaches, parks, museums, a lighthouse and various sporting venues.
32. Pupils value their school as a community that welcomes everyone in a positive and caring spirit of mutual respect. Through the curriculum, teachers place emphasis on respect for members of different groups and understanding of diversity in society. Pupils talk confidently about how discrimination is defined and know that insults show a lack of respect and may exhibit prejudicial views which should be avoided. Teachers emphasise diversity in contemporary society and arrange for pupils to experience diversity in the community, for example through visits to a local mosque and synagogue, as they explore the customs and practices of a range of religions.
33. Pupils study how laws came to be, appreciate that the passing of bills in Parliament creates British laws which define the differences between right and wrong and understand the role of public services, such as the police, in society. Pupils visit the law courts in Newcastle to see the judicial process in action. Teachers use a range of creative ways to emphasise concepts such as the rule of law. For example, when coding their own computer games, pupils learn that they cannot legally copy electronic resources that they find online and then pass them off as their own, understanding why doing so would infringe copyright law.
34. Through the curriculum and an array of experiences, pupils learn to appreciate the role of important values, such as democracy. Pupils elect members of the school council, decide upon the contents of an autumn-term party and participate in elections for the North Tyneside Young Mayor and Youth Parliament. Teachers use pupils' interests to develop practical activities that engage and enthuse them in further study, such as using the local statue of suffragette Emily Davison.
35. Teachers support pupils' financial awareness through discussions of topics such as money management, wages, best value and the difference between wants and needs. Teachers arrange speakers from various banks and other institutions such as the Department for Work and Pensions. They provide opportunities for pupils to experience activities such as buying items, paying at a till and getting a receipt. Pupils develop their entrepreneurship by planning events to raise funds for the school community or charity. Pupils have a budget, source raw materials at the best value, make items such as bracelets, clay models and pictures, and then market their goods. Pupils enjoy saving and exchanging their 'WOW' vouchers in the school rewards shop. They appreciate sometimes making joint decisions with their class and teacher as to the best way to spend or save the class 'enrichment budget'.
36. Teachers deliver a programme of careers education which informs pupils of a range of possible future pathways for their lives. Pupils access a range of work experience placements or alternative provision placements, chosen carefully to reflect their individual interests and talents, such as farms, stables and a performing arts centre. Leaders also facilitate a programme of vocational education and bespoke facilities to support pupils to learn about possible future careers in areas such as hair

and beauty, the media and food technology. Leaders work closely with external agencies, parents, carers and professionals to support pupils' successful transition to their next steps in education, training or employment.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

37. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

38. Leaders have embedded a thorough safeguarding culture that underpins the work of staff and leaders. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities are well trained and knowledgeable. They ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are effective and reviewed regularly so that they reflect the requirements of current statutory guidance.
39. Leaders respond promptly and effectively to safeguarding concerns. They consult external safeguarding partners and refer concerns to them when appropriate. Leaders keep thorough and detailed records of safeguarding matters and the decisions and actions taken in response to them. Suitable arrangements for the handling of allegations against adults are in place.
40. The proprietor body and governors are well trained and knowledgeable. They maintain a thorough oversight of the school's policies and procedures. They meet regularly, scrutinise reports, talk to staff and challenge leaders appropriately to ensure that measures in place are comprehensive and carried out effectively. Ongoing detailed regular reviews are undertaken which facilitate the governors' monitoring of the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures.
41. Safeguarding training for staff is thorough, regular and in line with the most recent guidance. A suitable induction process is in place to ensure that new staff understand their responsibilities. Leaders provide safeguarding updates, such as 'safeguarding snapshot' messages and twice-daily briefings that keep staff up to date. Staff know pupils well and keep in regular contact with parents and carers. Staff are vigilant and alert to changes in pupils' behaviour and conduct and respond appropriately when they are concerned. They refer concerns appropriately and in a timely manner.
42. Leaders provide pupils with regular and precise information about the various methods they can use to raise any concerns that they may have. Pupils talk matters through with staff. Should pupils prefer to put concerns in writing or to communicate electronically, they can use classroom suggestion boxes, which are checked daily, or a dedicated email address.
43. Leaders raise pupils' awareness of matters they will face outside school, such as risks relating to radicalisation, extremism and inappropriate internet content and conduct. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. They understand the need to keep personal information private, know how to create secure passwords, learn about the use of artificial intelligence and realise that not all information which they access, including images, is reliable. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring procedures are in place. These are tested regularly by the school. When alerts are received, leaders review them immediately and take appropriate action.
44. Leaders ensure that all appropriate safer recruitment checks on adults are made in a timely manner and are complete before they commence work at the school. Staff files are well organised and updated appropriately. The results of these checks are recorded in a single central record of appointments. There were administrative errors in some of the recording of this information. These errors were rectified during the inspection.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

45. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Parkside House School
Department for Education number	392/6011
Address	Parkside House School Station Road Backworth North Tyneside Tyne and Wear NE27 0AB
Phone number	0191 216 1051
Email address	admin@parksidehouseschool.co.uk
Website	www.parksidehouseschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Limited
Chair	Mr Richard Power
Headteacher	Mrs Belinda Young
Age range	10 to 19
Number of pupils	81
Date of previous inspection	10 to 12 May 2023

Information about the school

46. Parkside House School is a co-educational day school for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. It operates across two sites. The school's main building is located at the school's registered address in Backworth, North Tyneside. The school's second site is located approximately 15 miles away in Ashington, Northumberland. The school is owned by Acorn Care and Education Limited. The chief executive officer is also the chair of the proprietor body. The company is a division of the Outcomes First Group, who provide management support to the school. The proprietor and the management team are supported by a local governing committee who provide advisory support.
47. The school's last full standard inspection was conducted by Ofsted, with its last inspection in May 2023. This is the school's first routine inspection by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI).
48. The school applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a material change to the school's registration, to increase the school's total capacity to 95 pupils. The ISI conducted an inspection at the request of the DfE in February 2026 and recommended that the material change be approved.
49. All 81 pupils in the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities and an education, health and care plan.
50. The school has identified that a very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language.
51. The school states its aims are to provide a high-quality education package to pupils who have difficulties in relating to education or others within a mainstream setting. The school aims to achieve this through focusing on specific individual needs that often include the development of fundamental cognitive skills as well as developing increased self-esteem and thinking skills. Through 'The Parkside Way', the school endeavours to create a positive, respectful, and supportive school environment where every pupil can thrive and grow to their full potential as valued members of society irrespective of race, culture, or background.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

21 to 23 April 2026

52. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

53. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons across the school sites, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- discussions with the chair of governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

54. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents and carers who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

For more information, please visit isi.net