

Inspection of a good school: Sir Harry Smith Community College

Eastrea Road, Whittlesey, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE7 1XB

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 February 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The principal of this school is Dawn White. This school is part of Aspire Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Duncan Ramsey, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Zoe Botterill.

What is it like to attend this school?

The majority of pupils want to do well. They understand that their teachers want them to achieve high standards. Pupils trust the teachers who have developed positive relationships with them. They work hard for these teachers and produce high-quality work. Consequently, their learning is generally secure. However, many pupils endure a diet of temporary and substitute teachers. Here, sometimes aspiration and expectation is low. Pupils and parents are aggrieved as they see at times a lack of learning. This causes disillusion about school for some, including for some sixth-form students.

The vast majority of pupils are polite and engaging. They focus on their work and try to complete it to the best of their ability. However, learning is regularly disrupted by the behaviour of others. Pupils feel safe, although around school the behaviour of some is overly boisterous. Although pupils say that it has recently improved, a few continue to move around in a way that is not always considerate of others.

Pupils and parents are frustrated about how the school communicates with them. When systems change it is not clear how and why. This makes it difficult for pupils to conform and parents to support the school.

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

The school has redesigned its curriculum. It has thought carefully about how to inspire pupils. The school has a well-planned and ambitious programme of learning. The school

has ensured that the curriculum reflects the diversity of modern life. Pupils explain how they celebrate difference. The school has planned so all pupils have access to the curriculum without limitation. This includes those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The majority of teaching is well delivered. In more effective lessons, teachers routinely revisit prior learning. They also teach subject specific vocabulary clearly and explicitly. However, too often teachers do not consistently arrange learning activities that enable pupils to learn the knowledge they need. In such instances, teaching focuses on ensuring pupils complete tasks rather than learning the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not always learn about subjects in depth.

Similarly, in the higher quality lessons, teachers regularly check what pupils know and understand. They provide timely support when needed. However, this is not always the case. Too often teachers use inexact assessment methods. This results in teachers not realising when pupils forget or misunderstand something. When this happens, teachers do not provide the support these pupils need so they fall behind.

The provision for pupils with SEND suffers from the same inconsistencies all other pupils experience. Where teaching is strong, pupils benefit. Well-considered explanations, or additional thinking time to process information helps pupils understand important information. They learn well. However, where teaching is less strong, the impact on pupils with SEND is magnified compared to others. This causes them to, sometimes, fall behind their peers.

The provision for students in the sixth form is strong. Teachers' expert subject knowledge and delivery ensures students learn well. Students develop deep understanding of complex and abstract concepts. Students confidently apply these to different situations, effectively drawing together what they know.

The school has recently changed its approach to managing behaviour. The school has high expectations. However, pupils do not understand the changes. They are confused about what values they should be demonstrating. Some staff are unclear about what they should be doing and why. The agreed protocols to manage behaviour are not applied consistently. Pupils are not routinely challenged when they fail to meet the expectations set. Parents are highly vocal about what they perceive as embedded poor behaviour in the school.

The school understands the importance of pupils attending school regularly. It monitors pupils' attendance and works closely with families to overcome the underlying issues. As a result, the overall levels of attendance are beginning to improve.

The careers curriculum is well planned. Pupils access a range of activities, organisations and institutions that give them key information. This helps pupils make informed choices about their next steps.

As a consequence of the changes the school has made, a small number of staff feel workload is an issue. However, the majority of staff feel their workload is well managed by 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)

- Some teachers do not arrange effective learning activities that enable pupils to learn the curriculum well enough. As a result, some pupils are falling behind. The school should ensure that teachers deliver effective learning activities across the curriculum that ensures pupils achieve well.
- Some teachers do not routinely check what pupils know and understand. As a result, teachers do not realise when pupils have forgotten or misunderstand what they have been taught and fall behind. The school should ensure that all teachers are trained and routinely check pupils' understanding, using this information to address gaps and misconceptions.
- Staff do not have a shared understanding of the school's expectations of behaviour and do not deal with unacceptable behaviour consistently well. As a result, a small, yet significant number of pupils fail to meet the school's expectations. The school must ensure that all staff understand the school's expectations and use the behaviour policy consistently when dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2014.

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 special educational needs and/or disabilities (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	138053
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10318614
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1092
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	139
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Zoe Botterill
Principal	Dawn White
Website	www.sirharrysmith.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Aspire Learning Trust.
- The school is currently expanding. It will increase up to an annual intake of 240 pupils in September 2024.
- The school currently uses one registered and six unregistered alternative providers.
- The school runs a specially resourced SEND provision for up to 14 pupils with cognitive learning difficulties.
- 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

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 held meetings with leaders, including the principal, deputy principal, and special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the board of trustees and local governing body, including the respective chairs, the chief executive officer and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, drama, geography and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and curriculum documents in some other subjects. Inspectors reviewed documents about the school's support for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed the 364 responses and 281 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The lead inspector also spoke directly with two parents.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spent time speaking to pupils. The lead inspector considered a letter delivered by a pupil. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors spoke with several staff throughout the inspection. There were no responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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