

# Inspection of Sir Harry Smith Community College

Eastrea Road, Whittlesey, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE7 1XB

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Inspection dates:	30 September and 1 October and 6 October 2025
The quality of education	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

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 (CEO), Matthew Laban, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Karl Munns.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The school provides pupils with a broad and often ambitious curriculum. However, important knowledge, including in some topics relating to pupils' personal development, is not always taught well enough. Pupils do not always learn the important knowledge that they need. Consequently, they do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils say that lessons are calmer than they were. They are usually able to focus on their work. Most pupils treat each other with respect and want to do well. However, when teaching is less effective, the behaviour of a minority of pupils disrupts the learning of others. Some pupils make unkind comments towards their peers. This affects some pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils, like some staff, parents and carers, are frustrated when the school does not always deal with these issues well enough.

Pupils have many opportunities to broaden their interests. The school offers a range of clubs, such as choir and coding. Pupils can take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. They participate in trips such as to a local air museum. There is an annual school musical. Pupils meet a wide range of employers, apprenticeship and education providers. This supports them to make informed choices about their next steps.

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

The school has thought about the important knowledge that pupils need to know and the order in which they should learn it. Lessons usually follow a consistent structure. For example, teachers recap important content at the start of the lesson before moving on to new learning. When teachers implement the curriculum most effectively, they carefully check pupils' knowledge and identify any gaps. They make appropriate adaptations so that pupils can access the curriculum and learn well. However, because of inconsistencies in the quality of education over time, pupils do not benefit from consistently high-quality lessons. Staff do not check pupils' learning well enough and some pupils still have too many gaps in their knowledge. Staff lack the expertise and, at times, the information they need, to precisely adapt the curriculum for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This means that some pupils struggle to access the curriculum and to engage with learning. Some pupils are not progressing as well as they should.

The school supports pupils who find reading hard. This helps them access the curriculum. Leaders are aware that the support for younger pupils, who are at the early stages of learning to read, is timelier and more effective than the support provided for older pupils.

The school has successfully strengthened its expectations of how pupils should behave and wear their uniform. Pupils typically feel safe in school, although younger pupils are sometimes worried by overcrowding in corridors. Pastoral staff positively support pupils to improve their behaviour and with their well-being. The specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND and the 'yellow corridor' are both welcoming havens for pupils when they are worried. However, the school does not always collect the detailed information it

needs about pupils' behaviour, progress and attendance. This means it does not effectively target support for those pupils and staff who need it most. This includes for those students in the sixth form. The school has improved its work with families on attendance with some impact, but attendance is below national averages.

Students in the sixth form enjoy school. They are well supported with applications for higher education and other routes. They learn about personal finance and healthy relationships. This prepares them for the next stages in their education, employment or training. However, they often suffer from similar inconsistencies in their education to those that occur in the rest of the school.

The school's personal, social and health education curriculum covers appropriate topics, such as healthy lifestyles and consent. However, there is an inconsistency in how well it is delivered. This means that pupils struggle to learn and recall important knowledge. Pupils are not always fully aware of the appropriateness of the words they use. For example, some pupils make unkind comments about the appearance of their peers.

The school's systems do not provide leaders with the detailed information that they need to make the right decisions and to accurately gauge the impact of their actions. Changes in policies have not always been well thought out or well implemented. The school does not always communicate why changes take place. Consequently, some staff and parents feel frustrated. Trustees have taken important steps to address these issues, including appointing new staff and bringing in external support. However, there is further work to do, as they acknowledge, to improve the school's provision.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The school does not have detailed, timely information about how well pupils achieve, attend and behave, and about how well the curriculum is being taught. The school should ensure that systems are in place to make sure that it has an accurate picture of its provision so that it can identify priorities, provide support where it is needed and check that its actions are having the desired impact.
- The school has not ensured that staff check how well pupils learn the intended curriculum. Consequently, they do not always identify and close gaps in pupils' knowledge accurately or promptly enough. The school should ensure that staff have the knowledge they need to assess pupils' learning and successfully adjust the curriculum to meet pupils' needs.
- Pupils with SEND sometimes find it hard to enjoy school and to achieve as well as they should. This is because the school has not ensured that staff know how to make effective lesson adaptations for all pupils. Consequently, at times, pupils with SEND can

struggle to access the curriculum. The school should provide staff with the knowledge and support they need to consistently provide pupils with appropriate help.

- Some groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not attend well enough. As a result, there are gaps in their knowledge. They miss out on other activities and opportunities. The school should ensure that it fully identifies the barriers to high attendance and successfully addresses these, so that more pupils come to school more often.
- The delivery of the school's personal development programme is not always effective. The school has not checked that pupils learn what they need to know to fully prepare them for life in modern Britain. The school should check that staff are delivering the intended curriculum well. It should provide them with the support and guidance they need to do so.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138053
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10378514
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1093
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	92
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Karl Munns
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Matthew Laban
<b>Principal</b>	Dawn White
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sirharrysmith.cambs.sch.uk">www.sirharrysmith.cambs.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	28 to 29 February 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of Aspire Learning Trust. The CEO of the trust took up this role in April 2025.
- The school currently uses one registered and six unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school runs a specially resourced 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

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point in time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection started on 30 September 2025. It was paused in line with Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence policy. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/deferring-ofsted-inspections> Inspectors returned on 6 October 2025 to complete the inspection.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also met with the chair of the board of trustees, the chair of the local governing board and the CEO.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, design technology and drama. 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.
- To further evaluate the curriculum, inspectors reviewed documentation setting out the support for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 a wide range of documents, including trust and school development plans, policies and documentation related to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses of parents to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.

## Inspection team

Steve Woodley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Bessie Owen

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