

Cottenham Village College

High Street, Cottenham, Cambridgeshire CB24 8UA

Inspection dates 24–25 November 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- With the full and active support of governors and the academy's trustees, the headteacher, executive headteacher and other senior leaders have responded with vigour to the requirements of the previous inspection report. Expectations have been raised. A significant increase in outcomes has been achieved and the academy continues to improve.
- Academy leaders have been uncompromising in driving improvements in teaching, learning and assessment that have improved outcomes for pupils.
- Attendance has improved. Pupils are eager and confident learners. They take pride in their academy. They are respectful to each other and to adults, and conduct themselves well at all times of the day. They are well cared for and feel safe in a secure environment.
- The provisional information for 2015 shows a sharp improvement in examination results for almost all subjects, including English and mathematics, when compared to 2014.
- The sixth form is outstanding. This expertly led and managed specialist provision meets a very wide range of learners' needs. They achieve outcomes that materially improve their life chances.
- The pupils placed in the local authority's specialist centres for hearing impairment and speech and language difficulties are well cared for and make good progress.
- The academy trust and local governing body provide well-informed support and challenge to leaders and set for them challenging targets in continuing to improve pupil outcomes.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is fostered well, much aided by a rich diet of out-of-school activities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The degree of challenge set is not always judged consistently accurately for pupils at all levels. Consequently, rates of progress, although improved and improving, are not always as high as they could be.
- Teachers do not always check on pupils' understanding before moving on in a task.
- Middle leaders do not yet ensure that the best teaching is drawn upon consistently to show best practice.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the strong upward trend in outcomes for pupils by further raising the standard of teaching through:
 - ensuring that questioning checks fully on the understanding of all pupils
 - improving the challenge for all pupils by ensuring that tasks are well matched to their prior knowledge and understanding
 - ensuring that pupils have the support and guidance to progress at the best rate.

- Further develop the effectiveness of middle leaders in demonstrating and communicating the best practice in teaching in the academy to ensure consistency in using the methods most effective in ensuring rapid progress for all pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has been in post from September 2015. Ably supported by the executive headteacher, previously the headteacher, and a leader who has tenaciously pursued improvement, the already firmly established and rigorous plan for academy development has been further deepened. Academy leaders are working in close partnership with the trustees and governors. In a short time, the present headteacher has made clear that he is both sustaining the trend of improvement and bringing new, distinctive elements to it.
- Progress in raising standards since the last inspection has been continuous. All the recommendations made in the previous inspection report have been addressed with thoroughness and significant improvements achieved in key areas. The academy's ethos is now strongly aspirational and communicated to members of staff in all roles with clarity. The ethos of improvement is fully shared. In the online survey of staff views undertaken by Ofsted, there was unanimous agreement that the academy had improved since the last inspection. The degree of improvement in examination results for 2015 led to a Department for Education Regional Commissioner's award acknowledging high performance.
- Teachers are now held closely to account for the progress made by pupils in their classes. The quality of teaching is closely and accurately monitored by leaders. Any progression by teachers up the pay scale is firmly linked to the degree of progress made by their pupils.
- Teachers have access to high-quality training. Academy leaders have implemented distinct initiatives, including prioritising the development of teachers' subject-specific knowledge over more generic skills, in order to give a distinctive character to different areas of the curriculum.
- Middle leaders are increasingly effective in developing the quality of teaching and their contribution is growing. However, the very strong and innovative practice present in teaching, significantly in the practice of subject leaders themselves, is not always communicated to other members of staff and reflected entirely consistently in their teaching.
- The curriculum provides a suitably broad and balanced range of opportunities for pupils. The long-established strength in what is provided in history, geography and other humanities subjects ensures that pupils have additional opportunities to practise their writing skills in a variety of stimulating contexts. The inclusion of Latin in the curriculum affords a significant proportion of pupils the opportunity to extend their linguistic and cultural knowledge and boosts their English vocabulary. The curriculum is kept under active review and continuously developed.
- There is further enrichment through a full menu of extra-curricular activities. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the five annual 'conference days' when there is an exclusive focus on their personal, health and social education. The annual year's-end activities week is also highly valued by pupils. The academy's cultural programme is wide and includes musical performance groups in styles embracing brass band, rock and jazz.
- The academy hosts local authority provision for pupils with hearing impairment and for pupils with speech and language difficulties. Pupils spend a large majority of their time in mainstream lessons and school leaders ensure they are fully integrated and well supported.
- The progress, safety and well-being of the very few pupils who attend alternative provision is carefully monitored to ensure good standards.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered effectively. For example, last year's dramatic production had a Great War theme that united dramatic, political and ethical themes. Learning was reinforced by the link maintained with the French war graves of First World War soldiers from the local area and there are other connections leading up to a Somme commemoration in 2016.
- The way in which key themes are explored at length and across disciplines in the academy encourages deeper reflection by pupils. Cultural trips to Paris and Berlin prompted reflection by pupils; a visit to Sachsenhausen concentration camp had made a profound impression on them. The academy's different activities are strongly interlinked; the academy also made a successful bid to host a touring exhibition of the Anne Frank Trust.
- Fundamental British values are effectively embedded in the way that the academy has developed a harmonious and tolerant community. Pupils see in action and appreciate the benefits of tolerance and a broad cultural awareness.
- Pupil premium spending is well planned in order to promote the progress of disadvantaged pupils and its

impact is carefully checked. Catch-up funding for Year 7 pupils is deployed to good effect and gains in literacy during this period are rapid.

- Academy leaders work diligently to engage parents in the life of the school. Parents have ready access to senior leaders in order to discuss any concerns. Recent changes to behaviour policy met with a mixed response from parents, but leaders deliberately encouraged lively debates about expectations with regard to uniform and mobile telephone use. Parents completing Ofsted's online survey (Parent View) were almost unanimous in considering that the academy is a much improved and improving institution.
- The academy works in partnership with other local schools for their mutual benefit in bringing about improvement. It is also a member of the Anglia Gateway Teaching School Alliance.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The academy's trustees reflected after the previous inspection on how best to improve their knowledge and use of pupil progress information to hold leaders to account. They effected changes in the division of responsibilities between the local governing body and themselves. The outcome has been greater clarity in purpose. Governors now make well-informed, independent use of pupil performance information to challenge senior leaders.
 - Trustees and governors work closely with academy leaders in establishing strategic priorities. Their supervision of the budget is informed by a clear understanding of the priorities of the development plan.
 - Governors receive the appropriate information to allow them to scrutinise academy leaders' performance management of teachers and how this links to any pay increases that leaders authorise.
 - Knowledge of the use of additional funds, such as Year 7 catch-up and support for disadvantaged pupils, is thorough. Due diligence is exercised in checking that such spending provides value for money in delivering sufficient gains in pupils' progress.
 - Governors maintain a suitably close overview of safeguarding procedures.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders maintain safeguarding policy and practice to a good standard. All members of staff receive the appropriate general training and this includes that covering the most recent requirements. Those with key roles receive the necessary higher-level training.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers have high expectations. Typically, lessons are well planned and a large majority take full account of pupils' prior learning.
- Relationship in lessons are friendly and productive. Teachers successfully encourage pupils to support and value each other's ideas and opinions. This high degree of mutual support successfully encourages pupils' confidence in participating in lessons without any nervousness in case they offer a wrong answer.
- Many teachers successfully communicate real enthusiasm for their curriculum areas. They have secure subject knowledge that gives authority to their teaching and prompts lively debate with pupils. In Year 10, for example, discussion about the Munich putsch showed many pupils were passionate about the key issues and able to draw on solid background knowledge of the inter-war era in Germany.
- This security in subject knowledge is particularly true for middle leaders with a responsibility for leading in teaching and demonstrating the best practice for others. However, the match of tasks to pupils' prior knowledge and skills is not always made accurately. The most-able pupils are occasionally presented with tasks that do not stretch them. Pupils needing more support and guidance in being able to progress are sometimes required to move on before they have mastered the first stage.
- Teachers' questioning is mostly probing and pushes pupils to be considered and reflective in their answers. In Year 11 science, pupils were very closely examined on their understanding of carbon bonds and any misconceptions quickly addressed. However, the monitoring of pupils' understanding does not always cover all pupils; in some lessons, the most enthusiastic participants are more fully checked than others.
- Teachers follow the academy's marking policy closely and offer effective guidance for how work may be improved. Pupils are clear that marking has improved and they value what it tells them about their learning.
- Teaching assistants deliver well-planned support to pupils. Effective use of wi-fi technology enables

pupils' work on laptops to be actively monitored and supported from a remote location within the classroom. This allows pupils with special educational needs to feel more integrated into their classes, and therefore to develop greater independence, without sacrificing any of the benefits of close support. However, teaching conducted without teaching assistant support occasionally fails to take full account of the needs of pupils with special educational needs. In these cases, strategies to support them are not consistently embedded in teachers' planning or used entirely effectively to promote the best rates of progress.

- The specialist support for hearing impaired pupils and pupils with speech and language needs is effective and they make good progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Recent innovations, such as the academy's programme to foster personal development (SHINE) emphasise broad achievement as well as the academic, particularly qualities such as perseverance and helping others. Pupils value the incentives for personal development that the programme offers and the friendly competition between different houses.
- The few pupils whose behaviour requires improvement receive the help they need. Inspectors saw records confirming both overall improvement in behaviour and individual examples of pupils receiving well-judged support.
- The work of the academy to keep learners safe and secure is effective. Effective pastoral support for pupils builds their sense of security and encourages them to be confident to try new things. Pupils are helped to develop the qualities to become keen learners and to show persistence in completing classwork and homework.
- Pupils across the academy are well schooled in the principles of keeping safe in different social situations. Pupils in several year groups spoke of what they had learned in a comprehensive programme in Year 7 to introduce the basics of keeping safe online to new pupils.
- Pupils have minimal direct experience of bullying but nonetheless appreciate its forms and know how to respond. While there is confidence that adults in the academy are approachable and skilled in resolving problems, pupils appreciate that opposition to bullying is a shared responsibility. Older pupils were explicit in saying that unacceptable behaviour, including racism, would be something they would confront themselves.
- Pupils independently make decisions about charity fund-raising and recycling projects. Pupil council members confirmed that they had been promptly offered the support of link teachers to assist them when they requested the means to make more impact in formulating initiatives.
- Pupils receive good-quality advice and guidance to assist them in making considered choices about their next steps in careers and education.
- Pupils' appreciation of healthy and vigorous lifestyles is fostered by effective teaching in physical education, science and personal development and through extra-curricular activities. Pupils value the very broad range of sporting options and thriving after-school clubs, all of which have high levels of participation. Information is made available that allows parents to monitor their children's diet in school.
- Liaison with the alternative placement attended by a very small number of pupils is close. Checks are regularly made to ensure that their personal welfare, safety and academic progress are all of a good standard.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils arrive at classrooms ready to learn and behave well during lessons. Any distraction from the task in hand is rare.
- A small increase in the number of exclusions between 2014 and 2015 occurred in the context of raised expectations for behaviour. Historical information shows exclusions as lower than the national average. The views of parents and pupils and other evidence during the inspection confirm an overall trend of improving behaviour. School records show that there is thorough follow-up to any exclusions and intensive work with each individual that improves subsequent behaviour.
- The academy is an orderly community. Lunch and breaktimes see pupils socialising freely and in good humour; patient queuing and the polite opening of doors for others are typical. Pupils assured inspectors

that the good behaviour witnessed was how things usually were. Movement between lessons is purposeful and brisk. Although no bells are sounded to signal the start and end of lessons, pupils arrive promptly at their next session.

- Attendance has improved and is now above the average for secondary schools. The work of the academy to improve attendance is thorough and includes intensive work with specific families and groups where information shows a negative trend. Persistent absence is declining. Post-16 learners attend well.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points. There has been a strong increase in GCSE examination results since the last inspection, together with improvements to progress across years and for different groups.
- In 2015, the proportion of Year 11 pupils obtaining five GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, increased markedly compared to 2014. The proportion now compares favourably with other schools and the achievement was recognised in an award made by the Regional Schools Commissioner of the Department for Education. The increase in mathematics represented a particularly sharp rise.
- In English in 2014, the proportion of pupils making above expected progress was below average. The proportion has risen sharply and the 2015 figure is above the 2014 average. The proportion making more than expected progress has risen and is now approaching the national average.
- In mathematics in 2014, the proportion of pupils making expected progress was just below the national average and the proportion making more than expected progress was above average. Compared to the 2014 averages, the proportions for both expected progress and more than expected progress rose steeply in 2015 to well above average.
- Improvements in the rate of progress extend across the curriculum. In a large majority of subjects, the proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grades in 2015 was higher than the national average. Subjects where 100% of pupils achieved this included further mathematics, biology, physics and computing.
- The gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in the academy, as reflected in examination results, did not reduce between 2014 and 2015. However, in the context of wholesale improvement in achievement, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally narrowed appreciably, continuing an established trend. Gaps are closing in year groups across the academy, often rapidly.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs typically make good progress. In the sixth form, which is specifically adapted to the needs of disabled learners and those who have special educational needs, learners make outstanding progress.
- A very small number of pupils attend another provider for specialised support in improving behaviour. Individual records confirm that these pupils make good academic and behavioural progress.
- Reading is strongly promoted in the academy. Initiatives by leaders have contributed to increased library usage this year. It is a focal point for the pupils at lunchtimes and they speak enthusiastically of their preferences in books.
- Pupils are well prepared for progression in their work and education careers. All pupils who left the academy in July 2015 were enrolled on education or training courses in September 2015.

16 to 19 study programmes

are outstanding

- The sixth form delivers a highly specialist programme extremely effectively. A large majority of learners have special educational needs. Many join the sixth form from special schools, with parents choosing this post-16 option for their children because of their confidence in its ability to deliver high-quality care and strong outcomes.
- Very skilful advice and guidance assists learners in choosing courses that match their interests and offer the best chance of solid progression. In the last academic year, 100% of learners completed their courses and all achieved the qualifications they had embarked upon. Almost without exception, learners meet their targets.
- The physical environment is of exceptional quality and its flexible spaces are exploited to provide teaching

and social times in a variety of settings. Learners are given a carefully prepared introduction to the world of future work and study.

- Highly effective leadership ensures that the curriculum provides the best likelihood of progression for learners. Due prominence is given to improving skills in English and mathematics; all learners pursue further courses and make rapid progress. Other curriculum areas are principally vocational in character and supplemented by a general preparation-for-work course. Enrichment activities complement this and strongly contribute to learners' personal development. Learners are offered introductions to leisure and cultural pursuits that help to build their confidence to succeed in unfamiliar activities. The range of options is broad. They include dance, weight-training, a film club and an introduction to signing. The latter has particular significance in an academy where there is a centre for hearing impaired pupils.
- Teaching is very well managed. The generous staff to pupil ratio is successfully exploited so that learners receive a high degree of individual attention. Sixth form learners were clear that they respected their teachers and said explicitly that they considered staff to be experts in addressing their needs.
- Expectations for attendance and purposeful study are high and learners respond enthusiastically.
- Very high proportions of sixth formers move on to appropriate next stages in education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	137434
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10001954
Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	850
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	42
Appropriate authority	The Cottenham Academy Trust
Chair	Mrs A Moller
Headteacher	Stuart Lock
Telephone number	01954 288944
Website	http://cvcweb.net
Email address	headspa@cvcweb.net
Date of previous inspection	26–27 September 2013

Information about this school

- Cottenham Village College is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It is one of two schools that constitute the Cottenham Academy Trust.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, supported by the pupil premium, is much lower than the national average. Pupil premium funding is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average, as is the proportion of pupils believed to have a first language other than English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is much higher than the national average, principally because Cottenham Village College's sixth form has a specialist character and is focused on meeting these needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11. The specific character of the school's sixth form means that no judgement can be made in terms of the interim standards for 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Cottenham Village College hosts two specialist units of the local authority: one for hearing impairment and another for speech and language needs. Pupils from the units typically spend a large majority of their time supported in mainstream classes.
- A very small number of pupils with additional behavioural needs are educated at The Centre School. This is part of the same academy trust and situated on-site at Cottenham.
- The headteacher took up his post in September 2015. The academy trust also has an executive headteacher covering its two schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school. All year groups were seen, and most subjects. A high proportion of observations were conducted jointly with members of the school's senior leadership team. Other related activities included visits to small groups and 'learning walks' visiting different aspects of the work of the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work, in lessons and in specific sessions to do so. The latter sessions were conducted jointly with school leaders.
- In addition to informal conversations, inspectors met with three groups of pupils and with representatives from the student council.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders in school and with more junior members of staff.
- A meeting was held with the Chair of the Board of the Academy Trust and another with the Chair and another representative of the local governing body.
- Inspectors examined school records covering key aspects of the work of the school. These included those recording pupils' progress, governor minutes, attendance and logs relating to pupil behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors took account of 35 responses to the online staff questionnaire and 103 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View). 204 pupils completed the online survey for their opinions, which inspectors also considered.

Inspection team

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