

# Inspection of a good school: Hinchingsbrooke School

Brampton Road, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE29 3BN

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Inspection dates:

9 and 10 November 2021

## **Outcome**

Hinchingsbrooke School continues to be a good school.

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

Most pupils speak proudly about their school. They stay focused on their work and value the positive relationships they form with school staff, including with the pastoral teams attached to each year group. Pupils typically behave well in lessons and around school. A small number occasionally use derogatory language towards others. The few pupils who do not behave as well as they should are supported to improve their behaviour. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that bullying, while it sometimes happens, is not tolerated. When concerns are raised, most are confident that staff will help them to sort things out.

Pupils are taught how to keep safe. Opportunities to take on leadership roles and take part in sports and after-school clubs are back in the curriculum this year. In the sixth form, students have their own programme of enrichment which includes important life skills and regular support from tutors. Many students act as role models in taking on responsibilities such as being a house captain or student ambassador.

Pupils and students in the sixth form are very well supported to take the next steps in education, employment and/or training when they leave school, including to apprenticeships or to university.

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

Leaders are ambitious for pupils' personal development as well as for their academic achievement. Pupils have access to a wide range of subjects, including in the arts and sports. Their well-being is a high priority for staff, governors and the trust.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have acted to address the issues raised, and work has continued to improve the quality of education. Teachers know their subjects well. They have thought carefully about how they plan and teach the curriculum. Curriculum plans detail the knowledge and skills that pupils will need to know and remember at each stage in a logical order. The timelines are set out for when learning will be revisited to help pupils to remember more of the things that they have been taught. While curriculum

changes are managed effectively overall, a few subjects, including in languages and design and technology, are not as far ahead as others in establishing the revised plans, mainly because of historic staffing changes.

Teachers check regularly what pupils have learned, including, for example, through informal starter quizzes at the beginning of each lesson. The information collected is used to adapt plans and to correct any misconceptions should they arise.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported effectively to access the same curriculum as other pupils. Consequently, they achieve well, including through the school's specialist nurture provision. Support staff provide teachers with helpful information so that they can adapt subject-based learning to meet pupils' needs. The on-site alternative provision, The Gateway, offers a bespoke programme for pupils who need a different approach to learning in order to keep them in school.

Encouraging pupils to read regularly is a high priority. Time is set aside for reading each day. Extra help for pupils who need to catch up includes a focus on phonics and the decoding of unfamiliar words, which also supports improvements in their reading and spelling.

Leaders have ensured that all aspects of the national curriculum are taught in Years 7 to 9. Work with primary schools helps new pupils to settle in quickly. Most pupils take a language and history, or geography, as part of their GCSE choices now. In the sixth form, students have access to a wide range of courses, including some vocational options. Incoming students say they are welcomed warmly into the sixth-form community.

Pupils attend school regularly. While incidents of challenging behaviour have reduced, a small number of pupils occasionally use language that is disrespectful to others. Consequently, leaders have acted this term to strengthen their focus on the one school rule of 'respect', and to ensure that the behaviour policy is applied consistently.

Pupils and students in the sixth form have access to a range of opportunities to help them to take next steps in education, employment and/or training. Effective pastoral support is offered, for example, through a team of student support officers attached to each year group. Pupils are taught how to keep safe, show respect and form healthy relationships in lessons, tutorials and regular themed assemblies. Leaders encourage pupils to share their views on their learning experiences through regular questionnaires, student committees and focus groups. A series of 'drop boxes' have recently been introduced to support any pupils who might wish to share a concern anonymously. Leadership roles include student ambassadors and pupil representatives. Some sixth-form students act as house captains, and they work with younger pupils. Opportunities for pupils and students to take part in work experience are returning this year.

Leaders and governors are well focused on improving the quality of education through the curriculum developments in place. Staff say that leaders are supportive and mindful of their well-being. They appreciate the range of professional development opportunities available to them. Governors are skilled and experienced. They understand their responsibilities, including safeguarding, and their lines of accountability through the trust.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

A culture of safeguarding is well promoted across the school. Staff are suitably trained in the most recent guidance on keeping pupils safe. They understand the procedures to follow if they are concerned. Staff work effectively with external support agencies. Additional support, including counselling, is available to vulnerable pupils on site. Leaders take any concerns pupils raise very seriously, including those related to peer-on-peer-abuse. They encourage everyone to speak out. Pupils are taught how to manage risks online and out in the community. The single central record of pre-employment checks on new staff is well maintained and meets requirements.

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

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

- While it is being implemented effectively overall, some aspects of curriculum change are new and still embedding. Although improving, in a few subjects, some pupils have not achieved as well as they should over time. Leaders should check that the quality assurance processes in place are precise enough in evaluating the detail of what is working well so that they can provide additional support where any further improvement is needed.
- Although pupils generally behave well, a few do not live up to leaders' high expectations of behaviour and respect for others. Leaders should continue the work with the few pupils whose behaviour falls short of the standards expected so that all pupils consistently show the respect for others that is widely promoted across the curriculum.

## 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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2016.

## 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137475
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10199716
<b>Type of school</b>	Other secondary
<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>	1899
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	395
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Brian Message
<b>Principal</b>	Mark Patterson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hinchingbrookeschool.net">www.hinchingbrookeschool.net</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	26 and 27 April 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Hinchingbrooke School is a large secondary academy with a large sixth form.
- The school converted to become an academy in April 2011. It is part of the ACES Multi-Academy Trust.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- A small number of pupils spend time in the school's on-site alternative provision known as The Gateway.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead and other staff, including three early career teachers.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority and met with four governors, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: science, English, modern foreign languages, physical education and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and looked at work in a sample of pupils' books.
- A range of documentation was checked, including the single central record, associated school policies.
- Inspectors considered 139 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 130 free-text comments. Inspectors also took account of 107 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and 599 responses to Ofsted's pupils' questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Milligan

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ahson Mohammed

Ofsted Inspector

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