

Inspection of a good school: Granta School

Cambridge Road, Linton, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB21 4NN

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 November 2022

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 next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are safe and most feel happy. They like coming to school and seeing their friends. They say that staff are kind and will help them if they have any problems or concerns, such as bullying.

Pupils enjoy their lessons. Most work hard to concentrate and learn. Pupils with the most complex needs learn very well. Other pupils are not learning as much as they could. This is because adults do not know precisely what they need to teach them. In some classes, there are not high-quality resources to help pupils learn.

Older pupils in the school's 'Hive' enjoy the new building where they have their lessons. They say it is a calm area where adults really help them to do their best. However, the outdoor area does not help pupils' learning as well as it should.

Most pupils behave well. Over time, though, a small core of pupils who continue to struggle with their behaviour are not as well supported.

Pupils enjoy the trips and visits they go on. They like the activities linked to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

Most parents are very positive about the support their children receive. They are grateful to staff and leaders, who they feel work hard for their children.

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

There have been significant staffing changes at the school since the previous inspection. There have also been very recent staffing absences and difficulties recruiting. Leaders are

managing these absences, but it is hampering their ability to monitor and develop what is happening in the school beyond the day to day.

Over the last year, leaders have developed a new curriculum for pupils. They have thought carefully about how the curriculum helps prepare pupils for adulthood. However, some curriculum plans do not lay out precisely what pupils need to learn. Staff newly arrived at the school do not know exactly what leaders want them to teach. Leaders rely on adults co-planning with each other to make sure there is consistency in the delivery of the curriculum. This is not happening routinely. Leaders do not know enough about how well pupils are faring in some subjects, including in science and early reading.

The curriculum is more developed in some areas, including for pupils with the most complex needs and those in the early years. Here, staff are well trained both in the curriculum and how to support pupils' specific needs. These pupils are well cared for, are learning well and are happy. In particular, the development of early communication is very well developed, and this allows pupils to express their views with increasing confidence and clarity.

The school's life skills curriculum and enterprise programmes ensure that there are tailored opportunities to help pupils to prepare for adulthood. Pupils have access to appropriate accreditation, qualifications and careers education. They go on to appropriate education, training or employment when they leave. Pupils are very confident about how staff help them to become young adults.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) ensures that pupils access the broad topics required by statutory guidance. However, the issues related to curriculum planning in other subjects are also apparent in PSHE.

Most staff use well-considered techniques to help pupils learn to regulate their own behaviour. These help pupils to make friends, interact well with their classmates and enjoy their learning. Some newer staff have not been as well trained. Leaders, who until recently have often been covering lessons owing to staffing turbulence, are not identifying the few pupils who need more precise or specialist longer-term support. These pupils' behaviour is not improving well enough over time.

Newer staff, both permanent and temporary, are not sufficiently well trained to deliver the curriculum. Overall, a significant minority of staff are not happy and do not feel well supported by leaders to plan and deliver the intended curriculum and support pupils' behaviour.

There have been some changes to governance arrangements over the last year. Governors bring a high level of expertise, especially in safeguarding, health and safety, and finance. They are proactive in their support for the school, especially in their efforts to support leaders to recruit staff. Governors routinely visit the school. They are increasingly challenging leaders over the information provided to them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Appropriate checks on staff and staff training are in place. Leaders ensure that the use of physical intervention remains low and is only used in the most appropriate circumstances.

Staff are proactive and vigilant to pupils' needs or changes in pupils' behaviour. They pass on their concerns to leaders appropriately.

Leaders work effectively with external professionals and agencies to ensure that action is taken to keep pupils safe. On occasion, record-keeping of follow-up support for pupils is less detailed than it should be.

Leaders and adults ensure that pupils get regular access to activities that help them understand how to keep themselves safe and how to report any concerns that they have. Leaders have ensured that there is a focus on how pupils keep themselves safe online. This is an area of the curriculum where pupils receive lots of guidance and support.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staffing turbulence and absence remain high. A minority of staff are unhappy with the support and training they receive. Leaders and governors do not know enough about why this is. Leaders, governors and the local authority need to review more staff views to understand how better to improve staffing levels and morale.
- Leaders have, until recently, undertaken lots of operational work, such as covering additional lessons in the longer term. Leaders' capacity to undertake essential strategic work has been stretched. Leaders, governors and the local authority need to ensure there is sufficient leadership capacity to support the operational and strategic work in the school, including in staff training, monitoring and delivery of the curriculum and behaviour.
- Pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour are not being well supported by existing strategies and support. This is not preparing these pupils well enough to learn and behave well and become more independent. Leaders need to ensure that they identify pupils who need more specialist support and ensure that they receive this in a timely and effective way. They also need to ensure that all staff are as well trained in their chosen behaviour management systems.

Some staff are not well versed in leaders' intentions for the curriculum. There is a high-level of staff autonomy in the planning for the curriculum, which is not well monitored. Staff are unclear on what content needs to be covered in each year group and pathway. They need to ensure their monitoring checks how subjects, including reading, PSHE and science, are interwoven through this curriculum effectively.

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 February 2013.

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](#)' 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

Unique reference number	134937
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10241841
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	180
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	26
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Paul Ilott
Headteacher	Ruchi Datta
Website	www.granta.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 November 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school on 1 September 2020. There are several new leaders in the senior leadership team, some of whom were already working at the school but are now in promoted positions.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils have a range of needs, but most notably moderate learning difficulties, profound multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, and autism spectrum disorder. In the last two years an increasing number of pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs have joined the school.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no two-year-old children accessing the school's Nursery classes.
- There were no pupils accessing alternative provision at the time of this inspection.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects; early reading and communication, PSHE, physical education and physical development, and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to adults teaching and/or supporting pupils, and where possible reviewed pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning. Inspectors also considered aspects of other subjects on the school's curriculum.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers expressed through Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey of parents.
- Inspectors also reviewed responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils. Inspectors spoke to pupils on site.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors also spoke to a local authority commissioned school improvement officer and the local authority's assistant director for special educational needs and inclusion.
- The lead inspector met with several members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents provided by school leaders, including minutes of trustees' and governors' meetings, and documentation related to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Helen Jones

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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