

Inspection of Littleport & East Cambs Academy

Camel Road, Littleport, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 1EW

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils want to do well. Yet, the school does not provide them with an acceptable education. This disappoints pupils, most of whom attend regularly and are keen to learn. Pupils get frustrated by leaders' and teachers' low expectations of what they can achieve and learn.

The curriculum limits what many pupils can learn as well as their potential examination results. Pupils expressed concern over not being taught the material needed to achieve the highest levels of success at GCSE. This is a source of frustration for parents too.

Pupils feel safe at school. Pupils told inspectors that, if worried, they have adults at school they can speak with. Leaders have improved the way staff deal with bullying. Many pupils value the relationships they build with each other and with members of staff.

When given the opportunity, pupils willingly take responsibility to care for others and make improvements at the school and in the community. They appreciate lots of what the school offers them, such as the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Where the curriculum does not support pupils to learn, some become distracted and disengaged. Disruption to lessons is too commonplace. Staff are not well trained to manage this behaviour effectively, so pupils lose too much learning time.

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

Leaders' curriculum is well organised in most subjects. Leaders provide teachers with appropriate guidance to plan learning activities in a sensible order. In many subjects, however, teachers lack the expertise needed to deliver the curriculum well enough.

Many teachers do not quickly identify when pupils have not learned or remembered something that has been taught. Consequently, pupils fall behind. When teachers do spot pupils falling behind, many teachers do not use effective teaching approaches to help pupils quickly catch up.

Leaders do not accurately identify the needs of pupils who find reading difficult. These pupils do not get the support they need to become fluent readers. This is particularly the case for pupils who need help to learn phonics. Leaders created a library in September 2021. Staff ensure pupils use the library regularly. Many pupils told inspectors that they enjoy using the library and appreciate the books provided.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is of poor quality. Leaders take too long to identify these pupils' needs. Leaders have not made sure teachers know what pupils' needs are. Leaders have not provided staff with sufficiently effective training to cater for these needs. This means that

staff do not give pupils with SEND the support they need to learn well in each subject.

Pupils told inspectors that poor behaviour in lessons regularly disrupts learning. Inspectors found this to be the case. Teachers' inconsistent approach to managing behaviour leaves pupils confused. Leaders' approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour leads to many pupils removed from lessons and left without teaching. In social spaces during lunch and breaktimes, behaviour is often too rowdy. Some pupils use unacceptable language and make unkind remarks towards others. Leaders have altered the curriculum for those pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour in large groups. This is helping these pupils improve their behaviour. However, it limits their access to learning in several subjects across the curriculum.

Pupils do not understand the importance of fundamental British values, particularly the value of tolerance. Leaders have started to change the school's approach to supporting people who have characteristics protected by the Equality Act. For example, there is a well-attended support group for pupils who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender.

Leaders and staff provide many impressive extra-curricular opportunities, which pupils appreciate and thrive within. Pupils have taken responsibility to represent and improve the school in clubs such as the many sports clubs, Spanish clubs and 'Eco club'. Around one in four pupils in key stage 3 are taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

Leaders' provision for careers information, education, advice and guidance supports pupils well to make decisions about their next steps after secondary education. The poor curriculum, however, limits how well pupils are prepared for adult life. Leaders have ensured that the school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Leaders have not effectively engaged with parents. Many parents commented on Ofsted's online survey about the shortcomings at the school. Too many parents feel that leaders do not deal with their concerns. Communication between school and parents has been too infrequent.

Leaders have also not managed staff workload well. Staff raised many concerns about unreasonable workload at the school. They point out that they have too many tasks to be completed at the same time.

In 2021, trustees identified substantial weaknesses at the school and replaced the local governing body with a new board to have oversight of the school. Since then, the leadership team at the school has changed and introduced new policies. Leaders have a clear grasp of the many weaknesses in the school. Their actions, while in their infancy, are bringing about improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff and trustees have been well trained in safeguarding. Leaders provide regular updates and briefings so that all adults are aware of the risks pupils face.

Staff know the signs of harm and neglect. They respond immediately and appropriately when concerns arise. Leaders keep meticulous records about the provision in place to support vulnerable pupils. Leaders ensure that these pupils receive the support they need.

Leaders ensure that all adults are checked for suitability to work with children.

Trustees ensure that leaders and staff carry out their safeguarding duties effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not train staff effectively to identify pupils' needs and support them with their learning. This includes those in the early stages of reading and pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils are not learning as well as they could. Leaders need to improve teachers' abilities to identify pupils' needs and provide necessary support, including for those in the early stages of reading and pupils with SEND.
- Teachers do not know when pupils do not understand or remember aspects of the curriculum. Even when teachers do identify pupils falling behind, they do not provide effective support. Teachers must check what pupils know and can do and take effective steps to help those who start to fall behind, so these pupils learn and achieve well.
- Leaders and staff have not managed the behaviour of pupils effectively. As a result, pupils experience frequent disruptions to learning. Leaders must design an approach to managing pupils' behaviour that does not lead to pupils left without effective teaching. Leaders must ensure staff consistently follow leaders' approach to behaviour management.
- Many pupils and parents are unhappy with pupils' experiences at school. Leaders must engage much more effectively with parents and pupils. Leaders must create ways of addressing parents' concerns and communicating effective messages to build parents' confidence in the school.
- Leaders are making many necessary changes to the school. Staff are finding it difficult to keep up with the resulting increased workload. Leaders must work with teachers to find ways of making the right improvements to the school while maintaining a reasonable workload.

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

Unique reference number	140881
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10212081
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	560
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair of trust	Bob Dool
Interim Principal	Colin Taylor
Website	www.lecacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	5 November 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Littleport & East Cambs Academy is part of The Active Learning Trust Limited.
- In November 2021, an interim principal was appointed along with other members of the senior leadership team. A permanent principal has been appointed to start in April 2022.
- In February 2022, a temporary special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) was appointed. A permanent SENCo has been appointed to start in April 2022.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider and two unregistered alternative providers. The school also uses alternative providers that visit the school to provide support for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with members of the interim executive board, the chief executive officer, the executive headteacher, the interim principal, members of the senior leadership team, the interim SENCo and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, geography, mathematics, physical education and Spanish. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. One inspector also heard a sample of pupils read.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders and staff and looked at records about safeguarding, the school roll, the behaviour of pupils, the provision for pupils' personal development and leaders' approach to managing the workload of staff.

Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Duncan Ramsey

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