

Inspection of a good school: Witchford Village College

Manor Road, Witchford, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 2JA

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 January 2023

Outcome

Witchford Village College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Witchford is indeed a 'small school with big ambitions'. Pupils develop their interests because leaders have based the curriculum around these interests. Pupils study a curriculum that now has higher academic expectations about what they can achieve. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps, as they get a wide range of effective guidance and support. Pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are included. They get the support they need to access the same curriculum.

Pupils' learning is rarely disrupted. Where issues do occur, a warning is often enough to resolve them. Some pupils have concerns about the comments a small number of pupils make, which can make them feel uncomfortable. However, pupils know staff listen if they have a worry. Pupils value the range of ways to share worries. Leaders ensure that any incidents of bullying are identified and dealt with effectively. Staff support pupils' needs well. They provide nurturing environments where pupils need these. This all helps pupils feel happy and safe.

Pupils value the broad range of trips, visits and extra-curricular opportunities. This includes sports fixtures, university visits and productions such as 'Matilda'. Some pupils have not taken up these opportunities, but leaders are addressing this.

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

Leaders have designed the curriculum so that it is both academically ambitious and well-matched to pupils' needs. Pupils now study subjects in more depth at key stage 3 and have a wider range of academic study options available in key stage 4. The number of pupils studying subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate is increasing. This means they are studying subjects that provide a foundation of knowledge that provides pathways to a wide range of future study and careers.

Leaders provide training opportunities that enable curriculum leaders to effectively plan and sequence the important knowledge they want pupils to learn in each subject. Each

subject area has ambitious curriculum plans that build up pupils' knowledge over time. Pupils' understanding is developed because important content and concepts are revisited to help pupils develop a secure understanding.

Teachers provide clear explanations of new learning and give pupils examples that help them to understand it. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to revisit key knowledge, so that pupils connect and use previous learning well. Teachers regularly check what pupils know. Teachers provide follow up support to address any gaps in pupils' understanding. Most pupils achieve well in the subjects they study by the end of key stage 4.

Pupils at the earlier stages of reading receive support from specialist staff, which helps them to read more fluently. Pupils have opportunities to read a range of texts, through dedicated reading time in tutor periods.

Leaders have set clear expectations for behaviour. Teachers follow these expectations consistently and pupils understand them. This ensures that any low-level disruption is addressed effectively. However, a small number of pupils do not take enough responsibility for how they behave towards others.

Leaders ensure that pupils' learning needs are met well. When needed, teachers adapt learning effectively for pupils with SEND. 'The Zone' and 'The Cabin' provide specialist support for pupils with SEND. Staff in both provisions provide caring, bespoke, support to enable pupils to access the full curriculum successfully.

Leaders have ensured that there is a comprehensive programme of personal social and health education (PSHE). Pupils learn about tolerance, but a small number of pupils still make comments that make others feel uncomfortable.

Pupils' wider development is supported effectively. As well as trips, visits and sporting opportunities, pupils have access to a variety of employers, work experience and specialist guidance. This supports them to be well prepared for their next steps in further study or employment.

The school is led and managed well. Trust leaders have worked with school leaders effectively in order to further raise standards since taking on the school. Staff feel this has still been done in a way that is mindful of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that all staff have up-to-date training, so they are able to identify safeguarding concerns and how to report these. Leaders work with external agencies, such as social workers, to ensure pupils get the support they need. This work is well managed and recorded in school systems.

Leaders ensure that all pre-employment checks are carried out and recorded accurately. Suitable processes are in place to handle any allegations against staff.

Pupils learn about risk through the planned programme of PSHE. This supports them to identify and understand how to seek help with issues like sexual harassment.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils learn about tolerance and respect and how what they perceive as banter can make others feel uncomfortable. For a small number of pupils, understanding of this is not fully embedded. As a result, they still use words that make others feel uncomfortable. Leaders need to ensure that understanding of this is embedded with all pupils, so that all pupils are considerate of how the words they use can make others feel.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 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.

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	137547
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10240183
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	669
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Ray Harding
Headteacher	Richard Auffret
Website	www.witchfordvc.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 October 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has been part of the Eastern Learning Alliance since the trust was formed in September 2020.
- The head of school has been in post since March 2022.
- The school uses four registered alternative providers. The school uses three unregistered providers, which are all approved by the local authority.
- The school has an on-site specialist resource base, known as The Cabin, for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. The school has also developed its own provision for pupils with SEND, called The Zone.

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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum

leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors conducted meetings with the trust chief executive officer (CEO) and deputy CEO, trustees, members of the local governing body and leaders of provision for pupils with SEND, reading, behaviour and attendance, personal development, careers, PSHE and safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- An inspector visited the specialist resource base and spoke to pupils.
- An inspector met with the headteacher and CEO regarding the use of alternative provision. An inspector spoke to a representative from the local authority regarding the unregistered providers that the school uses, which are approved by the local authority. An inspector spoke with a sample of providers and parents of pupils who attend them.
- Inspectors explored the school's safeguarding culture through viewing safeguarding records and procedures, meeting with a range of pupils and staff and talking to safeguarding leaders.
- Inspectors considered the 113 responses and 79 free-text responses made by parents to the survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered 43 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 70 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Garry Trott

Ofsted Inspector

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