

Inspection of a good school: Isebrook School

Eastleigh Road, Kettering, Northamptonshire NN15 6PT

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 February 2023

Outcome

Isebrook School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending Isebrook School. They feel safe and happy in the caring school community. Pupils speak positively about their school. Leaders have high expectations about what pupils can achieve. They prepare pupils for life and work after school.

Pupils behave well. Staff have created a nurturing environment which helps pupils to succeed. They model what acceptable behaviour looks like. Pupils are quick to respond to staff's instructions. They show respect towards staff and to each other. Pupils trust staff. They know whom they can talk to if they have a concern. Staff do not tolerate any type of bullying.

Pupils enjoy taking part in an engaging and diverse curriculum. They enjoy running their own market stall and community library. Pupils also enjoy animal care and land-based studies at a local park. Pupils have the chance to practise their skills for the workplace. They take part in horticultural activities and benefit from a range of work experience opportunities, including assisting in the school's reception area. Pupils are proud to take up leadership opportunities. They act as house captains and vice-captains.

Parents hold positive views of the school. One parent, typical of many, said: 'The school has a really inclusive approach. My son is very happy there and his confidence has hugely improved.'

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

Leaders have constructed an exciting and meaningful curriculum. It is well matched to the needs of all pupils at Isebrook. In the majority of subjects, leaders have clearly set out what pupils will learn and when. Teachers share important knowledge clearly. As a result, pupils are well prepared for adult life. Teachers accurately identify pupils' needs. They adopt personalised strategies to meet these needs. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to review and apply the knowledge they gain. This helps pupils to know and remember more.

In some subjects, the new curriculum has not been in place for long enough for leaders to fully evaluate its impact. Teachers check pupils' understanding effectively in individual lessons. In some subjects, teachers have not yet checked how pupils' knowledge has developed over time. Some teachers do not have the knowledge and expertise they need to deliver the curriculum as effectively as they could. They do not always make links in their teaching between current and prior learning. They do not always match activities precisely to pupils' existing knowledge.

The school teaches reading and communication well. Leaders help pupils to read with accuracy and speed. This helps pupils to access and enjoy the different subjects they study. Staff who teach pupils how to read complete training to develop their practice. Pupils of all ages across the school genuinely love reading. Staff quickly identify pupils who need extra help. They ensure that these pupils receive support to keep up with their peers.

Students in the sixth form follow an ambitious curriculum. They gain the knowledge and skills they need to leave school prepared for adulthood. Staff ensure that students receive personalised support. They work with wider agencies to secure the support that students need. Students have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of projects. They have used the knowledge they have gained in lessons to improve the school and the local area. Students take pride in their school. They mow the grass and complete grounds maintenance to keep the school tidy and to help them gain life skills. They also have a garden at a local hospital.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils realise these expectations. They are polite and courteous to each other and to staff. They enjoy their learning. Staff encourage pupils and students to aim high. They adopt a can-do approach. Staff provide pupils with effective personal and academic support. Pupils benefit from positive learning environments.

Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to the local and wider community. They volunteer at the local hospital and help with community gardening projects. Isebrook is all about preparing young people for adult life. Some pupils have had their artwork displayed in a local exhibition. Pupils celebrate difference and take pride in the school's approach to inclusion and diversity.

Leaders have identified areas for development and taken action, for example in relation to curriculum planning and the recruitment of staff with particular expertise. Trust and school leaders identify areas of focus for staff training. They know that some staff require further training to ensure they have the knowledge and expertise to teach the curriculum. Most staff appreciate the available training opportunities. Most staff feel supported by leaders in relation to workload. Staff are proud to work at the school. They enjoy their work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular training. There is an established culture of safeguarding across the school. Leaders undertake all necessary checks regarding staff's suitability to work with children. Staff know how to report concerns. Leaders are swift and tenacious in their actions. They work effectively with outside agencies. This ensures that pupils and their families get the help that they need.

Pupils feel confident to speak to staff about any concerns. They know that they can share any worries that they may have. Pupils have lessons about keeping safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have designed a new curriculum for some subjects which were previously less effectively sequenced. They have not yet been able to assess the impact of this curriculum in every subject. As a result, leaders do not know precisely where pupils' knowledge and understanding are less secure. Leaders should ensure that they implement their plans to check pupils' understanding and the impact of the new curriculums.
- Some teachers do not have the knowledge and expertise to deliver the intended curriculum. This means that, in some lessons, activities are not as well matched to pupils' existing knowledge and understanding. Lessons are not always as closely linked to previous learning as they could be. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the knowledge and expertise they need to deliver the intended 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 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 predecessor school, Isebrook SEN Cognition and Learning College, to be good in January 2014.

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	141791
Local authority	North Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10268977
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	254
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	75
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jeannette Payne
Headteacher	Tracy Hall
Website	www.isebrooksen.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in January 2020.
- The school is part of the Creating Tomorrow Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school specialises in cognition and learning.
- The school is currently expanding its provision by adding to its horticultural facilities.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including reading, mathematics and preparation for adulthood. For each deep dive, inspectors met with

subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to a selection of pupils read.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and members of staff.
- Inspectors met with two trust leaders, including the CEO of the trust, and the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors also met with the school improvement adviser.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding, the lead inspector checked the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safer recruitment of staff and talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils informally.
- Inspectors met with a range of pupils formally and informally to discuss their views about the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and key performance indicators, and information about the school's curriculum.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and considered the results of the Ofsted staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Jason Brooks, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Rakesh Patel

His Majesty's Inspector

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