

Inspection of an outstanding school: Ambergate Sports College

Dysart Road, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 7LP

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 March 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding 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?

Ambergate Sports College is a kind and welcoming place to learn in. Pupils are happy and a delight to speak with. Before pupils join the school, staff work with families so that pupils make an excellent start at school. Pupils gain confidence, make friends and enjoy their education. They feel safe in school.

Leaders are highly ambitious for pupils. Leaders' motto, 'Every second to be valuable, inspiring and personalised (VIP)', is an expectation for all.

Pupils say that if bullying happens, they trust that staff would act to stop it. Staff know that pupils' behaviour communicates their needs and emotions. Staff know pupils well and can pick up on the smallest clues to help avoid problems even before they happen. Pupils learn to understand themselves and develop the knowledge and skills needed to become more independent and ready for adulthood.

Pupils value the 'power points' they receive as rewards. Many parents comment positively about the school. One said: 'This is a fantastic school. My child has thrived over the past four years. They absolutely love being at school. They are nurtured and well cared for and making excellent progress both socially and academically.'

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

Since the last inspection, the nature of the cohort of pupils attending the school has changed. Now, a greater proportion of pupils who come to the school have more complex needs. Leaders are adapting the curriculum in response to this change in cohort.

Developing effective communication and language skills is at the heart of leaders' work. Adults carefully consider the best way to use the wide range of aids to help pupils

communicate. Children develop their use of these communication aids from the Reception Year. This supports children in developing their ability and confidence in communicating with others. Pupils also learn how to use communication aids to ask questions and express their emotions.

Leaders rightly prioritise early reading. They check pupils' reading ability when they start at the school, including their phonic knowledge. Children in the Reception Year start to learn phonics quickly. Leaders also ensure that older pupils receive phonics lessons if they need them. Pupils enjoy reading, and leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their love of reading. This has included author visits.

There have been many changes during recent times. The new leadership team has been sharply focused on improving pupils' behaviour and developing the curriculum. These are having a positive impact. Leaders have changed their approach to behaviour management. This has been successful in reducing the frequency of incidents of unacceptable behaviour.

Leaders have been working hard to develop a sequenced curriculum. In some subjects, leaders have not set out the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils need to learn in the long term. As a result, pupils' learning does not always build over time as effectively as it could.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development, which is a large part of school life. This aspect of the curriculum is carefully planned. Staff enable pupils to develop the knowledge and skills they need to achieve a healthy lifestyle. Pupils learn how to have positive relationships with others. Leaders provide a wide range of activities which help to develop pupils' understanding of the wider world. For example, pupils experience residential visits to an outdoor pursuits centre. The local police has delivered safety awareness sessions to pupils around the risks online and the dangers of vaping. Pupils receive expert careers advice. This ensures that their post-16 pathways develop their interests and talents.

Pupils have access to a broad range of experiences beyond their formal learning. For example, they have links with a school in Germany and can take part in the annual exchange visit. Leaders arrange an 'international day'. Pupils learn about different cultures and faiths through food, music, art and dance. There are many clubs in school for pupils. Examples include chess club and eco-club. Pupils can attend mindfulness sessions.

Leaders are effective in identifying the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders provide the help pupils need quickly. The support that staff provide contributes effectively to pupils with SEND achieving well.

Trustees and governors have absolute clarity about their roles and responsibilities. They provide effective support and challenge. Staff are passionate about their work. They appreciate the support the school leaders give them. Staff say that leaders care about their well-being and are considerate of their workload. Staff are proud to work at Ambergate.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained and refer all concerns about pupils to leaders. Leaders work tenaciously to provide support for the most vulnerable pupils, and ensure that they receive this swiftly.

Pupils feel safe in school. They learn how to keep themselves safe when in the wider community, including when online, when using transport and when near water. They learn about peer pressure and risk-taking. Leaders ensure that pupils can communicate any worries or concerns that they have to staff, including pupils and children who are preverbal.

Leaders carry out all the necessary employment checks on staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some areas of the curriculum, leaders have not yet precisely planned the key knowledge they want pupils to know. This means that, in these subjects, pupils do not always develop a secure enough knowledge on which they can build their future learning. Leaders do not always know precisely how well pupils are doing in these areas. Leaders should ensure that, in all subjects, curriculum plans clearly lay out the precise knowledge that pupils need to learn so that they can build their learning as effectively as possible. Leaders should ensure they check that pupils are learning the curriculum well.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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, Ambergate Sports College, to be outstanding in January 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	141253
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10254969
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	175
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stephen Hopkins
Headteacher	Matthew Bloodworth-Flatt
Website	www.ganf-cit.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Ambergate Sports College caters for pupils with a wide range of SEND, including specific learning difficulties, speech, language and communication needs, moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and mental health needs and autism spectrum disorder. An increasing number of pupils have multiple learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties. Some pupils also demonstrate challenging behaviour.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The number of pupils on roll has increased rapidly during the past two years. The school was operating above its published admission number at the time of the inspection.
- Leaders use one registered and one unregistered alternative provider.
- This school is a member of the Community Inclusive Trust, and a member of the Grantham Additional Needs Fellowship.
- The new executive headteacher took up their post in January 2023 and there is a new chair of the local school board.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 these subjects: early reading and communication; mathematics; life skills and personal, social, health and economic education; and the creative curriculum. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to some pupils about their learning.
- To further look at the curriculum, inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum plans in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector spoke to the two special educational needs coordinators and leaders for attendance, behaviour and careers education, information, advice and guidance.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their experiences at the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher and members of the senior team.
- Inspectors held discussions with members of staff, which focused on the well-being and safeguarding of pupils, as well as how leaders support staff's well-being and workload.
- The lead inspector spoke with the chair of the local school board. She also spoke to members of the trust's executive team, including one of the directors of education, the chief executive officer and the chair of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including that relating to school improvement, safeguarding and the checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Anne Maingay, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Matthew Rooney

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

© Crown copyright 2023