

Inspection of Cromwell Community College

Wenny Road, Chatteris, Cambridgeshire PE16 6UU

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Jane Horn. This school is part of the Active Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Lynsey Holzer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Vic Daniels.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Cromwell Community College enjoy coming to school. They are happy and feel part of a warm and welcoming school community. Pupils who join the school say that they are helped to settle in quickly. There are positive relationships between pupils and adults. This leads to a calm and harmonious environment, where pupils trust each other. In the rare cases where there are disagreements, pupils have faith in adults to help them resolve issues.

Pupils know that all adults in the school want them to achieve success at the highest possible levels. Pupils, particularly those in the sixth form, value this ambition. The majority respond by working hard in lessons. As a result, many pupils produce high-quality work. The majority of pupils learn well.

Most pupils behave well. They are polite and respectful to each other and adults. The majority of lessons proceed without interruption. When learning is disrupted, it is resolved quickly and consistently. Pupils understand the expectations of how they should behave. They equally understand the consequences if they fail to meet these expectations. Where small groups of pupils struggle to behave well, the 'bridge' resource supports these pupils to learn ways of coping, and consequently successfully be able to access the curriculum.

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

The school has designed a curriculum rooted in ambition for all pupils, including for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Starting from the early years the curriculum identifies what pupils need to know by the end of each key stage. Learning is planned to ensure it builds on what pupils have learned before.

In the main, teachers use the curriculum planning to deliver quality learning experiences. Secure subject knowledge along with well-considered examples to explain concepts and knowledge support pupils to achieve well. This is particularly the case in sixth form, where students benefit from this when discussing complex concepts. The result is that pupils engage with learning activities confidently and learn well.

Provision for children in the early years is strong. Their formal learning is supported by carefully crafted play activities. As a result, children learn well and are well prepared for Year 1.

However, not all learning across the school, particularly in the primary phase, is consistent. Information is, at times, presented in a way that confuses pupils. Questions do not provide assurances of how well pupils understand what has been taught. In these cases, pupils struggle with their learning. At times they disengage and occasionally this leads to pupils disrupting others.

Reading is a high priority across all key stages. The teaching of phonics begins immediately when children start in the early years. Teachers deliver phonics well and have a secure understanding of how pupils learn to read. Pupils in the primary phase have a deep love of reading and books. They enjoy speaking about what they are reading. Books are matched to what pupils know. Pupils in all phases who struggle with reading receive support through bespoke interventions. This successfully helps pupils become confident and fluent readers, which in turn supports pupils to access the rest of the curriculum.

The school has put in place a curriculum to ensure that pupils learn about a range of topics and local issues in an age-appropriate way. This includes learning about different cultures, religions and lifestyles. Pupils learn how to be respectful and tolerant. Pupils use this learning to celebrate difference. They do not see difference as a reason to treat someone else unkindly.

Sixth-form students benefit from high-quality teaching. They are challenged to think deeply, and expectations are high. They respond to and often meet this challenge. Students are proud to take an active part in school life. They are positive role models for younger pupils in all phases.

The careers programme is well planned. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps. They are able to make informed choices with input from academic and technical institutions alongside local and national employers.

The school has provided a broad range of extra-curricular activities. These cover sports, performance and other general interests. While students in the sixth form take advantage of these opportunities, the uptake by all other pupils is low, particularly for pupils with SEND. This means that pupils do not benefit from the wider experiences that may support their future success. They miss out on the opportunity to develop existing and foster new interests and talents.

Staff feel supported. They are proud to work in the school.

Leaders work with governors to provide a high-quality education for all pupils. Governors support leaders, and equally challenge them, to ensure they hold leaders to account for the improvements being made in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are inconsistencies in how the curriculum is delivered across the phases in the school. At times, particularly in the primary phase, vital information or modelled examples are not communicated as clearly as elsewhere in the school.

Questions are not focused enough to pinpoint gaps or misconceptions. This means that pupils are not able to access learning activities as planned. This can lead to disengagement and, on occasion, low-level disruption. The school should ensure that all teachers in all phases are able to deliver the intended curriculum content with the precision and consistency expected.

- While the school has provided a broad range of wider opportunities to pupils, it has not ensured that it is responsive to pupils' interests and broader development. This means that pupils miss out on developing new talents and interests that could benefit them in the future. The school should ensure that the extra-curricular provision is engaging, attractive and inspires a wide range of pupils, including those with SEND, to take up the opportunities.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138177
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10268403
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,411
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	140
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Vic Daniels
Headteacher	Jane Horn
Website	http://www.cromwellcc.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 and 28 September 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Cromwell Community College is part of the Active Learning Trust.
- The school is currently expanding. It opened a primary phase of education in 2020.
- The school uses one alternative provider. This provider is registered and inspected separately by Ofsted.
- The school provides wraparound provision. This is managed by the school.
- 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

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher, early years leader and special educational needs coordinator. They met with a trustee and representatives from the local governing body and the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics, history, design technology and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To further inspect the curriculum, inspectors reviewed documentation setting out support for pupils with SEND.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to review safeguarding records as well as the human resources manager to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. To further evaluate safeguarding, inspectors also spoke to governors, staff, pupils and parents, and reviewed surveys.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils. The lead inspector reviewed the 53 responses to the pupil survey.
- To gather parents' views, inspectors reviewed the 125 responses and 77 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke with several staff and reviewed the 75 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Dave Gibson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Alastair Ogle	Ofsted Inspector
Kelly Stokes	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Stanton	Ofsted Inspector
Joan Beale	Ofsted Inspector

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