

Inspection of Melbourn Village College

The Moor, Melbourn, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 6EF

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Inadequate
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' learning experience is spoiled by poor behaviour. This detracts from how happy they feel. Leaders intervene to keep pupils safe from serious risks and incidents, including bullying. However, the attitudes of a minority around the school make many feel uncomfortable. Derogatory, offensive vocabulary is commonplace in some pupils' everyday language. Staff are inconsistent in the way that they challenge these behaviours. This, in turn, damages pupils' confidence in how some adults deal with issues.

Leaders expect pupils to achieve well in their GCSEs. Teaching prepares them for their examinations, including regular testing as they move through the school. However, expectations are not as high for the quality of pupils' everyday work.

Pupils are guided in their personal development through 'drop-down days', which are informative and well planned. However, morning form tutor-group time is not used effectively and means that the day does not get off to the best start.

The range of extra-curricular clubs available to pupils was reduced by the pandemic. Some opportunities are given in sport, drama and music, and after-school booster classes are offered in GCSE subjects. Trips abroad have resumed recently, such as the Year 8 trip to Spain and the Year 10 trip to Poland.

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

Pupils study a broad and balanced curriculum from Year 7 to Year 11. Schemes of work are planned and taught in a logical order. The requirements of the national curriculum are met, and all required content is covered. From Year 7 onwards, pupils take regular tests to track their progress against target grades for GCSE. While this approach helps them achieve adequately in Year 11 examinations, less attention is paid to addressing weaknesses in the depth and breadth of their knowledge and the quality of their everyday work.

Pupils with education, health and care plans, including those under the care of 'The Cabin', have their needs clearly identified. However, some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not routinely given enough support to ensure they access the curriculum that others do. Adaptations to learning are not implemented effectively by all staff, including both teachers and teaching assistants. As a result, pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they might. Provision is not managed consistently well across all aspects of the school's provision for SEND pupils.

Leaders have identified that a small number of pupils join from primary schools with lower-than-expected reading ages. A new programme has been introduced to support them, but it is too early to see the impact of this. For some of these weaker readers, distractions in class make it difficult for them to concentrate.

Lessons are frequently disrupted because of pupils' behaviour. Some pupils are compliant and willingly get on with their work. However, too many do not behave well and are frequently removed from class. When this happens, pupils miss out on important learning. Staff do not have the skills they need to apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and manage behaviour well. Some are overly dependent on additional support. Follow-up action is not effective enough and too many wrongdoings are often repeated.

The programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) has recently been revised. The 'drop-down days' are well structured and delivered confidently by staff. They include an appropriate focus on relationships and sex education, including matters of consent and respect. However, these are also marred by poor behaviour. Tutor-group time is not effective. These sessions are not managed or delivered consistently well. The school do not set high enough expectations at the start of the school day.

School leaders, including within the trust, have an accurate understanding of what needs to be improved. A thorough review of important policies and procedures has been undertaken. Some new subject leaders have been appointed. This has brought about improvements in curriculum provision. Frank conversations have been held with staff around expectations and responsibilities. While some have risen to the challenge and others have moved on, others are reluctant to change.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that all necessary recruitment checks are made on staff. A small number of administrative matters were corrected during the inspection.

Serious safeguarding concerns are identified, reported, recorded and followed up in a timely manner. This includes appropriate referrals to and support from external agencies such as mental health professionals and the police. However, because separate recording systems are used, there is sometimes a delay in safeguarding leaders becoming aware of low-level misbehaviour by vulnerable pupils.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They are clear about their wider responsibilities to remain vigilant and report concerns. Pupils learn about potential risk through the PSHE programme, including extremism and online danger.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Too many lessons are interrupted because of poor conduct. The application of behaviour management strategies by staff is not consistent. Misbehaviour in class or around the school is not addressed effectively enough and is repeated too often. Leaders and trustees should undertake a comprehensive review of the

school's behaviour policy and practice. They should ensure that all staff consistently uphold the highest expectations, and that wrongdoing is stopped quickly and without reoccurrence so that learning for pupils is not disrupted.

- For too many pupils, derogatory or offensive vocabulary is part of their everyday language. Leaders should continue to reinforce their message that this is unacceptable but also ensure that all staff challenge and report it when it happens. This is so that no member of the school community is made to feel uncomfortable.
- More emphasis is placed on assessing pupils through tests than on the quality of content in their books or practical work. While preparing them for examination techniques, it does not help to improve pupils' learning and understanding. Leaders, including heads of subject, should review assessment strategies to ensure that these effectively promote improvements in the quality of pupils' work and the depth of knowledge and understanding pupils have in all areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils with SEND do not consistently receive the adaptations to learning they require. This prevents them from fully accessing the curriculum and achieving well. Leaders need to ensure that staff are trained to make and implement these adaptations effectively. This is so that the needs of all pupils with SEND are met, that they are fully included in learning and that they achieve well.
- Opportunities to establish high expectations are not used effectively, for example, during daily tutor time across the school. This limits the effectiveness of provision for pupils' personal development. Leaders should provide training and support for form tutors so that all provision for pupils' personal development and the setting of high expectations is of consistently high quality. This will ensure all pupils know what is expected of them and every day will get off to a good, positive start.

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	137527
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10268147
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	636
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sue Williamson
Executive Headteacher	Christopher Bennet
Website	www.melbournvc.org
Date of previous inspection	27 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined The Cam Academy Trust in September 2013, shortly after the predecessor school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act.
- The executive headteacher was appointed as an interim measure in September 2022. He has now been appointed as permanent executive headteacher, with a new head of school taking up post in September 2023.
- The school uses three registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- An enhanced provision for pupils with autism, known as 'The Cabin', operates within the school. These pupils' learning is divided between The Cabin and main-school classes.
- 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.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His 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 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 held meetings with the headteacher and chief executive officer, senior leaders, other leaders, staff and pupils.
- As part of evaluating the quality of governance, the lead inspector met with the chair of the trust (who is also the chair of the local governing body) and other governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, modern languages (Spanish and Mandarin), history, art and design, and design technology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors explored other curriculum subjects through curriculum plans, visits to lessons and sampling work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors checked the school's single central record of recruitment vetting checks, considered its safeguarding policy and procedures, and spoke to leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered 175 responses submitted by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses submitted during the inspection. Inspectors also considered 54 responses to the staff survey and 145 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Mark Phillips, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Sutton	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Stainsby	His Majesty's Inspector
Damian Loneragan	His Majesty's Inspector

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