

Inspection of a good school: Cann Bridge School

23 Eden Valley Gardens, Estover, Plymouth, Devon PL6 8EE

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 September 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good 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 school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are clear that they are happy at Cann Bridge. They enjoy warm relationships with the adults who help them, and trust that they will keep them safe. Pupils know the behaviours adults expect of them. Pupils strive to meet these expectations by behaving well in class and during social times.

Pupils enjoy school. They are keen to learn and take part in what the school has to offer. However, the school recognises that there is more work to do to ensure that pupils achieve well. For example, in some subjects, the school is not clear on the knowledge and skills it wants pupils, from the youngest to the oldest, to learn. As a result, pupils do not build a deep understanding of these subjects.

Pupils are eager to be involved in the wider responsibilities the school offers. They enjoy the election process for the school council. They welcome the opportunities to be involved in the decisions the school makes, for example leading on recycling projects and the purchase of the buddy bench. Such activities help to develop pupils' social and leadership skills.

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

Over a number of years, the school has been experiencing a period of staff change. It continues to face challenges in the recruitment of staff. The school recognises the impact on pupils of these staffing issues and is seeking to recruit new staff.

The new school leaders are ambitious for the school and have accurately identified the improvements required. The school is aware that pupils do not gain the knowledge and skills that they should in some subjects. There are plans in place to address this issue, but these are in their early stages of development.

Until recently, governors have not held the school to account effectively. New governors are now in place and understand their statutory duties. Together with school leaders, they are committed to making the required changes to ensure that pupils receive the education they deserve. The new visions and values of the school are now clear, 'Together, We Can be aspirational, learner focused, collaborative and progressive.' For example, the changes to the curriculum demonstrate higher aspirations for pupils.

The school aims for every pupil to become, at the very least, a functional reader. However, the approach to early reading is not securely in place. Pupils in the early stages of reading do not get sufficient time to practise their reading. This means they do not gain the fluency and confidence they need to build their reading skills. While some pupils have stories read to them regularly, others do not. As a result, some pupils do not experience the joy a story can bring.

The school has a clear focus on developing pupils' independent skills. Pupils work towards their personalised learning goals, which the school identifies from the pupils' education, health and care plans. These prepare pupils for their future beyond school. For example, the school has recently installed a laundry area where pupils can learn how to wash and dry their clothes. Such a focus equips pupils with the skills necessary to navigate their next steps with success.

Students in the post-16 provision have high-quality and impartial careers guidance. For example, they experience the application and interview process. Students enjoy their work-related learning, which includes working in the café and the bacon bar. This helps them prepare for jobs and college applications when they leave school.

Pupils' personal development is well considered. The school provides pupils with opportunities to understand more about the wider world they live in. For example, pupils experience a wide range of activities beyond the school. They enjoy volunteering in the community, undertaking the Ten Tors Jubilee Challenge and working towards their Duke of Edinburgh's Award. These activities help build confidence, develop organisational skills and increase independence.

Pupils enjoy the additional activities available to them in school. Experiences such as dry diving and 'beatbounce' are popular with pupils. The school supports pupils' wider interests, for example working in the world of media. Such opportunities inspire pupils and help build their self-esteem.

Parents have mixed views about the school. For example, some parents are unhappy with the changes to the school day. However, other parents have confidence in the school and feel their children are thriving and that the school meets their needs well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school is not clear enough about the key knowledge and skills it wants pupils to learn. As a result, pupils do not build a deep understanding of these subjects. The school must complete the work it has started, to ensure that all subjects identify the key knowledge and skills pupils need to learn and revisit as they progress through the school.
- The school's approach to teaching phonics and early reading is underdeveloped. Pupils at the early stages of learning to read do not have enough opportunity to practise their reading to develop their fluency. The school must ensure that pupils have the chance to practise and increase their confidence in reading.
- Over time, governors have not held school leaders accountable. As a result, the improvements needed in the school slowed. The new governing body must ensure that systems are in place to provide an effective level of challenge to school leaders.

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 school to be good in March 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](#)' 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	113645
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10268788
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	97
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Simon Skidmore
Headteacher	Shane Baker
Website	www.cannbridgeschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Cann Bridge is a school for pupils who have a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and physical or complex medical conditions.
- All pupils who attend have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The new headteacher started in January 2023.
- There is an interim deputy headteacher currently in post.

Information about this inspection

- 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 met with the headteacher, the interim deputy headteacher, other staff and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils across the school read to an adult.
- The lead inspector met with the head of education and an education improvement partner from Plymouth local authority.
- The lead inspector spoke with the school's independent school improvement partner.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered key documentation, including school strategic development plans and governors' minutes.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. The lead inspector met with the headteacher to discuss and scrutinise how they respond to behaviour incidents and pupils' attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including free-text replies and email correspondence. Inspectors spoke with parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gill Hickling

Ofsted Inspector

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