

Inspection of Cottenham Village College

High Street, Cottenham, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB24 8UA

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires Improvement

The principal of this school is Zoe Andrews. This school is part of Astrea Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Rowena Hackwood, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ben Brown.

What is it like to attend this school?

Cottenham is an aspirational and inclusive school where pupils enjoy learning. Pupils value education and work hard to achieve the high standards the school sets for them. Pupils demonstrate curiosity in lessons and ask interesting questions about what they are studying. Pupils thrive when given opportunities to discuss sophisticated topics in the curriculum.

Pupils take responsibility for themselves and others. They make positive contributions towards the school's community, such as serving as school councillors or 'It Stops Now' ambassadors. Pupils benefit from the school's enrichment opportunities, such as the educational visits to sites of local, national and international interest that happen during the annual activity week.

Pupils behave well. They follow teachers' routines and focus on their learning in lessons. There is a pleasant atmosphere in the school. Pupils conduct themselves sensibly during social times and enjoy each other's company.

Pupils are safe. They know how to keep themselves safe at school, home and in the community, including online. They also know what to do if concerns arise. When the infrequent incidents of bullying happen, staff deal with the issues well so that it stops and does not continue.

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

The school's well-designed curriculum supports pupils to achieve well. The results of national examinations in 2022 were impressive, placing the school in the highest 20% of schools nationally for progress and attainment in many subjects. Since then, changes in pupils' needs and staff changes mean that leaders are making necessary alterations to the curriculum and focusing staff training where it is required.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and deliver the curriculum effectively. They help pupils remember knowledge over time by regularly reviewing what has been taught. Teachers check what pupils know and understand. They provide timely support for pupils who need it.

Some parents report concerns about the school's work for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and parents' inability to get appointments to discuss issues with leaders. Most teachers give helpful support for pupils with SEND. Some teachers do not fully understand, and therefore do not provide for, the exact needs of some pupils. Leaders are taking steps that are improving the quality of provision for pupils with SEND. There is still more work to do to reassure some parents. Deaf pupils benefit from strong partnership between the school and specialist staff working in the local authority provision based at the school. This means they can access learning with their peers and participate in school life.

The school is developing a strong reading culture. Many pupils enjoy the recently introduced reading time in form groups. During this time, and across the curriculum, pupils access a diverse range of appropriately challenging texts. Staff identify and successfully help weaker readers to improve their reading.

Pupils understand the school's behaviour policy and appreciate the rewards they receive for good conduct. Pupils celebrate each other's success. Teachers generally apply the policy consistently so that the rare instances of unacceptable behaviour are quickly stopped. Pupils learn free from disruption caused by unacceptable behaviour.

The school has prioritised pupils' wider development. Staff expertly deliver an extensive personal, social, health and economic education programme through lessons, during form time and in assembly. Pupils speak about contemporary issues confidently and with sophistication and sensitivity. They are well equipped to live in contemporary society alongside people with different beliefs and lifestyles.

The comprehensive careers advice and guidance programme supports pupils to make informed decisions about potential careers.

Staff report positively about pupils' experiences while at Cottenham. Staff have confidence in the leadership of the school and appreciate leaders' support to maintain positive workload.

Governors and members of the trust board know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They challenge leaders effectively to ensure the school continues to improve.

Many parents would recommend the school. A minority would not. There is more to be done to assure a minority of parents of the rationale behind changes leaders have made to some policies at 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)

- Some teachers do not adapt aspects of their teaching well enough to meet the exact needs of pupils with SEND. As a result, where this is the case, these pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school must continue to provide the training needed so that teachers can support pupils with SEND consistently better.
- Most parents are positive about the work of the school. Some parents are concerned about the provision for pupils with SEND and the school's behaviour policy. School and trust leaders should continue to review their approach to

communication so that parents are given appropriate information about changes made at the school. Leaders should also ensure they provide timely responses to any specific questions that individual parents may have about their children's education.

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	137434
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10288504
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	875
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ben Brown
CEO of the trust	Rowena Hackwood
Principal	Zoe Andrews
Website	www.astreacottenham.org
Dates of previous inspection	30 October to 1 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Astrea Academy Trust.
- The principal joined the school in September 2021.
- The special educational needs coordinator joined the school in April 2023.
- The local authority has a base at the school to deliver support for deaf pupils.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers and seven unregistered providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 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 discussions with the chair of the trust, trustees, governors, the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, teachers, members of support staff, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: design and technology, English, geography, mathematics, religious education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum, looked at curriculum documents, looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke to some pupils about their learning in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed behaviour of pupils in lessons and during social time.
- Inspectors looked at relevant documents, considered pupils work and held discussions with leaders, staff and pupils about the provision for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors considered the 55 staff responses, the 79 pupil responses and the 302 parent responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

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