

# Inspection of a school judged Outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Samuel Pepys School

Cromwell Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 2EZ

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Inspection dates:

3 and 4 December 2024

## **Outcome**

Samuel Pepys School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils, all of whom have complex needs, enjoy learning at this school. They approach their learning with exceptional determination. Pupils thrive within the school's can-do ethos and show the school's value of positivity throughout the school day. They work hard to achieve the school's high expectations. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, are rightly proud of their exceptional achievements.

Children in the early years quickly learn the school's routines and expectations of their behaviour. As they grow, pupils develop strong relationships with their peers and staff. Pupils show great respect for others. For example, during class discussions, they listen attentively and wait patiently for their turn to share their ideas. Pupils dine well together at lunch and tidy up after themselves. The playground and social areas are pleasant places where pupils, and students in the sixth form, enjoy each other's company.

Pupils are very well supported to reach their high ambitions. For example, all students in the sixth form take part in work experience and achieve the bronze standard of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Pupils gain the confidence, knowledge and skills they need to make positive next steps in education, employment or training.

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

The school has an exceptionally well-designed curriculum. Leaders and staff seamlessly integrate within the curriculum the expected outcomes from pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. The school's curriculum is planned in a logical order, enabling pupils to build what they know in sensible steps.

Owing to the school's highly effective training, staff teach the curriculum remarkably well. They arrange learning activities exactly matched to pupils' needs. Staff ensure that pupils learn each step thoroughly before moving forward in the curriculum. Staff seize every opportunity to help pupils review what has previously been taught. This ensures that pupils remember key knowledge. Staff also precisely check what pupils know and can do. They use this information well to plan pupils' next steps in learning. As a result, pupils make excellent progress through the curriculum during their time at the school.

Pupils learn to communicate and read exceptionally well. In the early years, staff model spoken language with great clarity. They provide high-quality support. This enables children to express themselves clearly whether through speech, sign or communication devices. Children delight in the books that staff read to them. Children also learn the basic sounds they need to start reading. Building on the strong foundations of the early years, staff in later key stages are highly effective in teaching pupils how to read. Staff carefully match books to pupils' abilities. This gives them lots of opportunities to practise the sounds they know. Pupils take great pride in their reading and do so willingly, whether independently or aloud in class and assembly. Pupils enjoy reading the rich collection of books they find in the 'literacy lounge'.

Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons, during social times and when moving around the school. The school equips pupils with strategies to recognise and manage their emotions. When pupils struggle, staff provide highly effective support to help pupils regain calm and return to learning.

Pupils value learning and enjoy school so they attend regularly. The school provides effective support for those pupils that find regular attendance difficult. For example, the school works with external agencies to help families manage healthcare appointments in ways that limit interruptions to pupils' learning at school.

The school prepares pupils very well for adult life. It helps them to learn strategies to overcome their challenges and live as capable young adults. Many parents commented that pupils learn and experience things that were previously thought to be impossible. For example, the school ensures pupils requiring specialist hospital beds learn how to camp outdoors and take part in adventure pursuits like power boating. Similarly, all pupils learn the importance of community service by volunteering at school or in the local community.

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, show curiosity about the diverse lifestyles and beliefs found in contemporary society. They speak sensitively about and show respect for other's differences.

Leaders and governors have built a remarkably effective team of teachers and support staff. They evaluate the quality of the school's provision with pin-point accuracy. The school uses this information to build precise development plans. When training needs arise, it arranges training opportunities that exactly target what staff must learn to improve their work. Staff routinely share what they learn with their colleagues. This contributes towards systematic, ongoing improvements across the school.

Parents are highly positive about the care and support staff give to pupils and families.

Governance is strong at the school. Governors have an accurate understanding of the quality of the school's provision. They give the support and challenge needed to ensure that the school continues to offer an excellent education to pupils. Staff appreciate the positive ethos in which they work. Staff morale is high. They value the way leaders help staff maintain reasonable workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **Background**

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in March 2019.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110951
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10345125
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	124
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	16
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Anne McCormick
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joanne Hardwick
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.samuelpepysschool.co.uk">www.samuelpepysschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	26 and 27 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Samuel Pepys School caters for pupils with SEND. The school provides education for pupils with moderate, severe and profound and multiple learning disabilities. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has moved into new accommodation situated next to the original school buildings. Building work was still underway during this inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- 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

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 governing body, governors, the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, teachers, members of support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 pupils' behaviour in lessons, when moving around the school and during lunch and playtimes. Inspectors also considered a range of documents and other information about the behaviour, attitudes and the personal development of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

## Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Helen Jones

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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Manchester  
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