

Inspection of The Cavendish School

Park Drive, Impington, Cambridgeshire CB24 9LY

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Stephanie Smith. This school is part of Eastern Learning Alliance multi-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, Lucy Scott, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David James Warwick. There is an executive headteacher, Victoria Hearn, and a deputy chief executive officer, Ryan Kelsall, who are also responsible for this school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at this school, fulfilling the school motto of 'enabling the self'. Many pupils have had a significant amount of disrupted education before joining. It is often the first positive school experience that pupils have. From the outset, pupils benefit from the relentless determination that staff have for them to succeed. Pupils' individual needs and interests are precisely understood. Everyone is accepted for who they are. Pupils respond positively to this. As a result, they re-engage with learning exceptionally well.

With great care and expertise, pupils are supported to integrate successfully into school life and routines. Pupils return to attending school regularly. They make significant academic and social progress within a short period of time. Pupils are motivated to take GCSEs and are optimistic about their future careers.

Pupils receive high-quality support to manage their feelings and emotions. They value how well adults understand them. This reduces anxiety. The school is calm. Pupils work and play cooperatively due to clear expectations and well-adapted provision. Pupils enjoy competitive games. There is a successful football team. Pupils enjoy cooking, enrichment afternoons, reward trips and visiting the local community. Young entrepreneurs are encouraged. Pupils access role models who represent what neurodiverse individuals can accomplish.

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

Pupils succeed at this school due to an aspirational curriculum that enables their academic and personal development. The school places no ceiling on what pupils can achieve. The key knowledge and social skills pupils need to succeed are carefully and clearly woven through each year group and subject. Teachers know exactly what pupils need at each stage of their learning. Leaders are very knowledgeable and support colleagues expertly to deliver the curriculum as intended.

The school accurately identifies pupils' strengths, as well as gaps in knowledge. These careful checks mean that pupils are placed in classes that best match their needs. As a result, pupils build swiftly on what they already know, while also having gaps in learning addressed quickly. Pupils' specific education, health and care plan (EHC plan) targets are incorporated into their daily, personalised timetable, along with therapeutic support from an in-house team. This holistic approach means pupils keep up and catch up well.

Pupils like reading. The school ensures all pupils can read confidently and fluently. It provides rapid and precise support for pupils who have fallen behind. It ensures that all pupils access high-quality texts to support their writing as well. Many pupils overcome their reluctance to write.

Pupils are very successfully supported to re-engage with learning quickly and sustainably. Through individualised and creative approaches, the school works tirelessly to ensure that pupils go from being non-attenders in previous settings to having high attendance here.

As a result of direct teaching of emotional regulation strategies, and well-timed preventative measures, the school is an orderly place. For pupils who need extra support to manage their feelings, the school responds to this swiftly and appropriately. Pupils react positively to the consistent and fair way staff manage behaviour in the school. Pupils can share their worries verbally or via email, which they do.

The personal development programme at this school is exceptional. It successfully supports pupils to achieve their specific social targets through planned opportunities to rehearse these throughout the school day, in a range of situations. Staff ensure pupils gain a firm understanding of social concepts that they may find harder to grasp, such as stereotypes, recognising social cues, use of appropriate language and relationships and sex education. Pupils receive excellent careers advice and opportunities to develop life skills, including applying for 'mini-jobs' in school. Pupils understand democracy through voting on key aspects of school life. They are being well prepared for adult life in modern Britain.

Governors and trustees use their expertise to hold leaders to account effectively. They know this school well. Leaders are supported and challenged in equal measure. Leaders check on staff's well-being regularly. Staff appreciate this and know that their workload is considered. A large majority of parents are also very positive about the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	148578
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10295137
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David James Warwick
CEO of the trust	Lucy Scott
Headteacher	Stephanie Smith
Website	www.thecavendishschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened as a new school in September 2021 as part of Eastern Learning Alliance multi-academy trust. The school is supported by the executive headteacher from the adjacent secondary school within the trust.
- The school currently has pupils on roll from Year 3 to Year 10. It will have Year 11 pupils from September 2024.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative providers to provide therapeutic support.
- The school provides education for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. All pupils on roll have an EHC plan.
- The school also employs its own team of therapists.

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.
- The inspectors held meetings with the head of school, the executive headteacher, the chief executive officer, the deputy chief executive officer, the deputy headteachers, the assistant headteachers and teaching staff.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, art and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, the inspectors spoke to leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, looked at pupils' work and spoke with teachers and support staff.
- The inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work from across the curriculum and talked to other subject leaders.
- The lead inspector spoke to the link trustee for the school and met four members of the local governing board, including the chair of the local governing board.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, governors' and trustees' minutes and governors' visit notes.
- 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.
- The inspectors considered the responses gathered through Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, which included 50 free-text comments. There were 29 responses to the staff survey. No pupils answered the pupil survey. However, the inspectors spoke to and met several pupils from different year groups during the inspection, along with a range of staff.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lorraine Ratcliffe

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024