

Inspection of a good school: Soham Village College

Sand Street, Soham, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 5AA

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 March 2023

Outcome

Soham Village College continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very proud to attend this school. They understand that teachers have high expectations of them and want them to be the best they can be. Pupils respond positively to this challenge and work very hard to succeed.

Soham Village College offers a vast range of well-attended extra-curricular clubs. As one pupil said, with little exaggeration 'there's literally a club for everything!'. Many clubs such as 'Creatopia' have been set up and are run by older pupils. Many pupils in Years 9 and 10 take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Consequently, in addition to learning the curriculum and achieving highly in examinations, they become active, considerate, and resilient young people.

Pupils feel safe at this school. They know that adults will provide them with care and support when they need it. Pupils know about potential dangers. They know how to report concerns if they emerge and are confident that staff will deal with these effectively.

Pupils treat each other and adults with respect. They behave very well in and out of the classroom. There is very little bullying and leaders deal with any incidents well. Staff are highly skilled in providing additional support and guidance for pupils that need help with well-being or behaviour. As a result, pupils make considerable progress in their learning, free of disruption to lessons.

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

The school's motto is 'excellence with care'. As such, leaders and staff are ambitious for all pupils to succeed, and all support them to do so. In recent years, leaders have invested considerable time working with teachers to review and improve the curriculum. They have identified the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils need to gain and have planned

the curriculum skilfully to ensure that each new topic builds upon and reinforces previous learning. Leaders and teachers regularly check how well pupils are doing. Where there are gaps in knowledge, teachers adjust their plans to make sure these are closed. When pupils receive feedback from teachers, they spend time improving their work. They understand where they are secure in their knowledge and how they can do better. As a result, pupils become increasingly reflective and self-reliant. They consequently make rapid progress across the curriculum.

Leaders provide high-quality training for staff, which develops their knowledge and skills. Departmental teams plan and work together to ensure that the curriculum is rigorous and is delivered as they intend. Teachers use consistent pedagogical approaches across the curriculum. For example, they build in structured activities that pupils use to go over previous learning and to make links to new topics. This helps pupils know more and remember more.

Pupils at Soham Village College behave very well. They want to do well and are happy that others rarely disrupt their learning. They are competitive with each other to gain rewards and awards for themselves and their House. Leaders use well-understood systems to closely check how pupils are behaving. They provide help for those who need additional support, such as structured form time activities in the 'Progress Tutor Group'. This improves pupils' motivation and organisation and, therefore, helps all pupils to access the curriculum successfully.

Pupils encounter a wide range of visitors, especially as part of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Through these they learn about topics such as sexual harassment, healthy relationships and consent. Pupils learn about the world of work as part of a comprehensive careers programme, including outside speakers and visits from employers. This prepares pupils for the next steps in their education and employment. Pupils benefit from many leadership opportunities.

Leaders and teachers have high expectations of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers set tasks that are challenging for all pupils. Teachers know the needs of pupils well, and adapt the work set for them accordingly. For example, teachers provide targeted support for weaker readers, which enables them to become more accurate and confident. Where needed, additional personalised support for learners with SEND is provided at 'The Hub' and through the 'Foundation Learning Tier'. Consequently, these pupils make excellent progress.

Leaders are determined that disadvantaged pupils make the same progress as other pupils. They have worked hard to improve the attendance of these pupils and their outcomes. Opportunities provided, such as a trip to France for disadvantaged pupils, raise their aspirations and broaden their experiences.

Members of the local advisory board and trustees are knowledgeable and highly committed to developing the quality of education. They challenge leaders and visit regularly to check safeguarding and support the work of teachers. Staff say that they are well supported in their work and that they enjoy working at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are vigilant about the safeguarding of pupils. They carry out appropriate checks to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils. Leaders and staff use robust systems to identify, record and monitor safeguarding concerns. They work closely and tirelessly with the local authority and other services to ensure that pupils and their families get the individualised support that they need.

Staff are well trained and are kept up to date with safeguarding issues. Pupils are provided with high-quality information and guidance, including from external visitors, on how to reduce risk and report concerns. As a result, they know how to keep themselves safe.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in 6–7 December 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use 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	136610
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10211066
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	N/A
Number of pupils on the school roll	1400
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	N/A
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Simon Wright
Headteacher	Jon Hampson
Website	http://www.sohamvc.org/
Date of previous inspection	6 and 7 December 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a member of the Staploe Education Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school runs its own on-site provision called 'The Isle'. This provides support for pupils with attendance, health and behavioural issues.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinators.
- Deep dives were carried out in four subjects: English, science, modern foreign languages and history. For each deep dive, an inspector met 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.

- Members of the school advisory board, trustees and the chief executive of Staploe Education Trust met with the lead inspector.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school. They met with groups of pupils.
- Inspectors held a series of meetings with leaders and pupils to discuss the school's safeguarding arrangements. They scrutinised a range of records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The views of staff, pupils, parents and carers were considered through discussions during the inspection and responses to the Ofsted online surveys.

Inspection team

Steve Woodley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Wilson

Ofsted Inspector

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