

Inspection of Soham Village College

Sand Street, Soham, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 5AA

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 June 2024

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

The headteacher of this school is Jon Hampson. This school is part of Staploe Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Carin Taylor, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Simon Wright.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are extremely happy at Soham Village College. They feel valued, trusted and respected. Consequently, pupils take great pride in their school. They feel it is an honour to represent the school at events or as part of a team. Pupils are welcomed daily into an environment that builds their confidence and self-belief. Consequently, pupils flourish academically and personally.

Pupils know that teachers have very high expectations for them to succeed. They expect to be given work that challenges them. This has resulted in pupils developing a strong sense of resilience. Pupils try hard and produce work of exceptional quality. They articulate their learning with a maturity beyond their ages. Consequently, they achieve very highly.

Pupils are extremely polite and respectful. Pupils want to learn, strive for excellence and care about each other. As a result, behaviour is exemplary, and lessons progress free from disruption.

Pupils enjoy a myriad of opportunities to develop or extend their interests. There is an extensive range of sports, creative and general interest activities on offer. Many of these clubs are set up and run by pupils. Pupils enthusiastically take advantage of all that is available to them.

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

The school has crafted a curriculum that is highly ambitious for all pupils. Subject specialists have identified the important knowledge that pupils need to secure. Pupils learn this knowledge in small, expertly ordered chunks. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They use this to explain things with a high degree of precision. Teachers skilfully weave knowledge together across subjects and over time. This means pupils can use what they already know to help them learn new content. Teachers regularly test out what pupils understand. They address any misconceptions before they can become embedded. This means that pupils confidently approach independent activities. Extensive practice helps pupils secure each piece of knowledge. Over time, pupils put these pieces together to build a deep, rich understanding of the subjects they study. The quality of their written work is exceptional.

The school places a high priority on reading. Pupils read widely and often. The library is a hive of activity as pupils choose books from a wide range of genres and authors. Pupils who struggle to read are quickly identified. Personalised plans, delivered by highly trained staff, help pupils improve. As a result, pupils quickly increase their confidence and become fluent readers.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are very effectively supported. Specialists provide teachers with detailed information about pupils' specific barriers to learning. Teachers use this information to ensure that learning

experiences and activities are accessible to all pupils. Consequently, pupils with SEND make progress that is as impressive as that of their peers.

Pupils understand that they are part of a community where everyone's actions can impact on everyone else. They are determined to be the best they can be. This results in an exceptionally positive attitude to their own and each other's learning. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary.

The personal development programme is comprehensive and meticulously planned. Opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of the modern world are embedded into the entire curriculum. Pupils value key principles such as tolerance, democracy and respect. They embrace these values and demonstrate them routinely in their lives. This helps foster the ethos of the school. Everyone is accepted and no one is left out.

A precisely planned offer of careers education is woven through the curriculum. Input from local businesses brings classroom learning to life. Pupils get information about how the subjects they study can lead to different careers. As a result, pupils make well-informed choices about their next steps.

Trustees have a clear understanding of the school. They know what it does exceptionally well, yet still strive for further improvements. Staff are proud to work at the school. They value how leaders trust them to do their jobs without burdensome oversight and workload.

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	136610
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10323704
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	1,414
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
CEO of the trust	Carin Taylor
Chair of trust	Simon Wright
Headteacher	Jon Hampson
Website	www.sohamvc.org
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 March 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Staploe Education Trust.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider of education. The school runs its own on-site provision, called 'The Isle'. This provides support for pupils with attendance, health and behavioural issues.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 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.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the trust board and local advisory board. The lead inspector also met with the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages, art and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To further inspect the curriculum, inspectors listened to pupils read, met with leaders and reviewed curriculum documentation for music and drama and reviewed documentation setting out support for pupils with SEND.
- 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 talked with groups of pupils, both formally and informally, at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors also considered the responses to the pupil survey.
- Staff's views were sought through discussions and through the staff survey.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Dave Gibson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sharon Pritchard	Ofsted Inspector
Donna Young	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Fowler	Ofsted Inspector
Emma Mason	Ofsted Inspector

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