

Ely College

Downham Road, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 2SH

Inspection dates

11–12 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have transformed the school by successfully establishing a culture of high expectations of both staff and pupils. As a result, the quality of education has improved rapidly. Parents, carers and pupils recognise the significant improvements that leaders have made.
- Leaders have worked relentlessly to improve behaviour, teaching and achievement. Staff share leaders' ambition and want the best for pupils.
- Teaching is effective in helping most pupils to make strong progress in many subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Leaders have carefully constructed a curriculum that supports pupils' academic and personal development well. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities, a well-planned personal social and health education (PSHE) programme and the PLEDGES system contribute strongly to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain.
- The Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (the trust) has been instrumental in securing rapid improvements in the school. School leaders' work with the trust has contributed to improved teaching, learning and assessment and ensuring that leadership at all levels is strong.
- Governors have a comprehensive knowledge of the school. They provide appropriate support and challenge, which ensure that school leaders' actions result in improvements.
- Adults know pupils well and provide them with the support needed to complete their studies and progress to education, training or employment.
- The sixth form provision is good. Students typically achieve well on the vocational courses offered. Leaders have re-introduced A-level courses to broaden opportunities for post-16 study in the local area.
- Disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well as they should by the end of key stage 4. The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is improving, because of raised expectations and well-considered support.
- Pupils' behaviour is improving and is good. There remains a small number of pupils who do not consistently meet adults' high expectations of behaviour.
- Pupils attend regularly. Attendance is above the national average. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is not yet as high as for other pupils in the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, by ensuring that all teaching is consistently highly effective in supporting pupils to make strong progress.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and attendance by:
 - raising the attendance of disadvantaged pupils so that it at least matches that of all pupils nationally
 - improving the behaviour of a small number of pupils who do not consistently meet teachers' high expectations of behaviour.
- Improve the effectiveness of 16-19 study programmes by evaluating fully the revised provision to ensure it continues to meet the interests, needs and aspirations of all students and enables them to achieve well.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Since taking up his post, the principal has been unwavering in his determination that only the best will do. Senior leaders, the trust and governors have successfully transformed the culture in the school. There are now high expectations and aspirations set for both staff and pupils in all respects. Staff and pupils have risen to the challenge. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment, achievement and behaviour have all improved significantly as a result.
- Staff share leaders' ambitions for making the school as good as it can be. The responses to Ofsted's staff survey were highly supportive of leaders and recognise improvements that they have made. Importantly, these improvements have not been achieved at the expense of staff members' well-being. Almost all staff say that they enjoy working at the school and feel valued.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were supportive of school leaders and acknowledged that significant improvements have been made. One comment, typical of many others, stated: 'Ely College has changed hugely in the past three years, all for the better.'
- Leaders' regular checks on the quality of education inform precise self-evaluation of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Their carefully considered plans, underpinned by thoughtful actions, have brought about marked improvements in behaviour and the quality of teaching. This, in turn, has raised pupils' achievement. Leaders are not complacent. They know where there is more work needed to improve the school further and have credible plans in place to achieve this.
- Subject and pastoral leaders are highly effective. They use their regular checks on their areas of responsibility to identify areas for improvement accurately and make sure that the actions they take make a difference. They appreciate the freedom senior leaders give them to decide what actions are needed to achieve their priorities for improvement. They understand fully, however, their roles and responsibilities in bringing about improvement across the school.
- The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) leads her area of responsibility extremely well. She has a comprehensive understanding of the quality of provision for pupils with SEND and their achievement, which has informed her detailed improvement plans. The approach to meeting pupils' needs, introduced by the SENCo and supported by the trust, has been successful in ensuring that these pupils receive timely and highly effective support. A comprehensive programme of training for teachers and support staff has ensured that pupils' barriers to learning are overcome, helping pupils with SEND to make good and improving progress.
- Leaders use support judiciously to improve the quality of education provided. Work with other schools in the trust has strengthened the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through the sharing of ideas about what works well and the checking of the accuracy of teachers' assessments. Leaders have made good use of funding and support from the Fenland and East Cambridgeshire Opportunities Area to improve provision. This includes support for the recruitment of teaching staff, supporting the viability of additional programmes of study for post-16 students, training a member of

staff to provide careers information advice and guidance, and training for staff to support pupils' emotional and mental health.

- Staff, including teachers who are new to teaching, value the very wide range of training and development opportunities provided. Leaders provide weekly sessions where staff reflect on their practice, research what works well and share ideas. Leaders act swiftly and decisively to improve any teaching which does not meet their high expectations. They provide any additional support and training needed, but do not shy away from taking firm action if improvement does not occur.
- Leaders have constructed a curriculum that provides extremely well for pupils' academic and personal development. They review the curriculum regularly to ensure that it is well matched to the needs, abilities and aspirations of pupils. As a result, very few pupils do not progress to the next stage of education, employment or training at the end of their time at the school. No pupils have been permanently excluded from the school over the past three years.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are supported very effectively. All pupils study religious education to GCSE level, there is an active chaplaincy and a programme of trips and visits to raise awareness of others' beliefs and cultures. A well-planned PSHE programme provides many worthwhile opportunities for pupils to reflect upon moral issues, healthy lifestyles and relationships. 'Session Six' offers pupils extensive opportunities to pursue their personal interests, including in sport, culture and the arts.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used effectively to provide programmes to improve pupils' basic reading, writing and mathematics skills. This helps most pupils to make strong progress, often from very low starting points.
- Leaders use additional funding for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that they have access to all the activities offered to other pupils and any additional help that they need to overcome barriers to learning. This includes additional small group or individual teaching where needed. Leaders' evaluation of the impact of this funding on pupils' progress and attendance has strengthened, so they know what works well. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school has improved, though the absenteeism and behaviour of a small number of pupils still limits their progress.

Governance of the school

- The trust's core values underpin the work of the school. School leaders and governors share the trust's vision for the school. The trust appointed the current principal and vice-principals and has provided highly effective and much appreciated support. They supported the principal to establish much-needed systems to improve behaviour and set high expectations of the quality of teaching. The trust has ensured that governors have the wide range of knowledge, skills and expertise needed to make the academy council a highly effective body.
- Leaders, staff and many parents are clear as to how the trust has been instrumental in bringing about rapid improvement. In addition to subject and leadership networks and specialist support from its staff, the trust regularly checks on the work of the school. Leaders and governors use these checks to further refine their improvement plans. The trust's chief executive officer has an accurate view of the progress made by the school.

- Governors know the school extremely well. They use their detailed knowledge and expertise in education to very good effect. Regular, purposeful visits to the school ensure that governors are very well informed about the quality of education provided. Governors provide an appropriate balance of challenge and support to school leaders. This ensures that leaders' actions make a difference and are in the best interests of pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders and governors ensure that those working in the school give safeguarding the highest priority. Leaders' checks to ensure that adults are suitable to work in schools are thorough and recorded accurately. A designated governor regularly checks on the school's safeguarding procedures and gathers pupils' views on whether they feel safe. Leaders use these checks to refine their processes and procedures to keep pupils safe.
- Staff receive regular training and updates on how to keep pupils safe from harm. Leaders ensure that policies and procedures reflect the latest published guidance. Staff know how and when to refer concerns. The designated safeguarding leader reviews these promptly and makes referrals to external agencies when appropriate, so that pupils and their families get any help that they need in a timely fashion. Leaders identify patterns in referrals to provide training to staff and teaching for pupils that is relevant to emerging concerns in the school.
- Pupils learn how to stay safe, including when working online and using mobile technology, through the school's PSHE programme. The school works closely with external organisations, including the police, to make sure pupils are aware of risks, including those of extremism and radicalisation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Most teaching is effective and builds upon the positive relationships that teachers have established with pupils. The very large majority of pupils are willing to participate in learning activities, answer questions and contribute their views and ideas. Established routines and clear expectations mean that time is typically used well. Consequently, lessons generally flow smoothly and help most pupils to make good progress over time.
- Teachers have equally high expectations for all pupils. They routinely use their knowledge of pupils and assessment information to plan and adjust activities, so that they are appropriately challenging for pupils' different needs and abilities. As a result, most current pupils, including the most able pupils and pupils with SEND, are making good progress and progress is improving for disadvantaged pupils.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is effective. Reading is promoted well. Key stage 3 pupils have a regular reading lesson. The weakest readers benefit from individual support, including using a commercial scheme, to improve their reading skills. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to apply their learning from English and mathematics confidently in other areas of the curriculum. For example, in science pupils use their calculation and graph skills with confidence. Pupils in key stage 3 read

aloud confidently when given the opportunity to do so in history and geography lessons. Teachers in all subjects support pupils' writing by correcting errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

- Homework is used effectively to support pupils' learning. Tasks either consolidate learning, give pupils the chance to apply their learning or prepare pupils for new learning.
- Teachers routinely use questioning to check pupils' understanding. The most effective questioning goes beyond the recall of facts and definitions and challenges pupils to show deeper understanding or build upon their initial answer.
- Pupils receive feedback in line with school and subject department policies. Although there are some inconsistencies by a small number of individual teachers, the large majority accurately identify pupils' achievements and areas for improvement. Pupils value teachers' guidance and feedback. Their responses to teachers' guidance typically result in improved quality of work and better understanding.
- Teachers provide parents with regular information on pupils' progress. Most parents find this helpful and easy to understand, and so feel well informed about their child's progress.
- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to plan carefully considered sequences of learning that build upon pupils' prior learning. Occasionally, when this is not the case, some pupils disengage from learning and a minority do not then meet teachers' high expectations of behaviour.
- The large majority of teachers focus on helping pupils to use subject-specific vocabulary and specialist terms accurately, so that they can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. For a few teachers, this aspect of their practice is an area for development.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The structured PSHE programme is successfully promoting pupils' personal development and welfare. Form tutor activities, assemblies, visiting speakers and special events (PLEDGES and FUTURES days) cover issues such as diversity, bullying, employability skills, democracy and healthy relationships.
- Pupils are clear about how the school promotes tolerance and understanding of difference. They spoke positively about a recent 'diversity day' and about an LGBTQ group established by Year 11 pupils that has contributed to assemblies. There are very few instances of use of homophobic, racist or derogatory language.
- The school's awards system PLEDGES provides a range of character-building opportunities that pupils are expected to complete during their time at the school. The PLEDGES cover diversity, leadership, service, giving, excellence, participation and the environment. Pupils are rewarded for demonstrating that they have contributed to

these aspects and have developed qualities such as citizenship and responsibility, both in and outside of the school.

- Pupils' understanding of British values is promoted well. Visits from the local member of parliament, a mock election and electing members of the house council and school executive support pupils' understanding of democracy.
- Pupils value the house system and the pastoral care it provides. A comment submitted to Parent View which stated: 'The house system and vertical tutoring make the school feel smaller and more like a family' is typical of the appreciation parents expressed for the level of pastoral care. A number of other comments were positive about how pupils new to the school and Year 7 pupils are helped to settle quickly into the school. In addition to monitoring pupils' progress, form tutors' termly academic mentoring helps to build relationships and contributes to the school's focus on pupils' well-being and welfare.
- The programme of support offered by the school helps almost all pupils to progress to education, training or employment when they leave the school. The most vulnerable pupils benefit from 'The Hub' which helps to meet both their academic and their social and emotional needs.
- Leaders provide excellent support for pupils' emotional and mental well-being. They have invested in training a number of staff to support this aspect of the school's work.
- A comprehensive programme of careers education and opportunities for work-related learning help pupils to understand the value of education and learn about the world of work. Leaders have plans in place to strengthen this programme further to provide high-quality individual guidance to pupils. Pupils value the advice that they receive about their option subjects and about the opportunities open to them when they complete their studies.
- Leaders make appropriate use of alternative provision for a small number of pupils. They make regular checks on pupils' attendance, progress and welfare.
- The large majority of pupils say that bullying, when it occurs, is dealt with well by teachers. Responses to Parent View support this. Pupils devised the anti-bullying charter which all pupils sign at the start of the year. Leaders are aware, however, that there are some pupils who still experience difficulties in their relationships with others. They provide focused support for these pupils. Reported incidents of bullying are low. Incidents are recorded, as are leaders' actions to deal with them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are typically polite and courteous. They arrive to the school and lessons on time and ready to learn.
- Pupils, teachers and parents state that behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, has improved markedly. This is supported by leaders' records and analysis of behaviour incidents.

- Although stairways and hallways can become crowded, there is calm and orderly movement between lessons and at less-structured periods of the school day, such as before school, lunchtime and breaktime.
- Expectations of behaviour are high and clearly communicated to pupils and their parents. Higher expectations initially resulted in the instances of pupils being excluded from school for fixed periods of time being higher than the national average. Most pupils have responded well to higher expectations, and exclusions this year have reduced. However, a small number of pupils do not yet consistently meet teachers' and leaders' high expectations of behaviour.
- Attendance for all pupils has been above the national average for all pupils for the past two years. Few pupils are frequently absent from school. Leaders provide a range of support for pupils and their families to improve attendance. Leaders do not shy away from taking firm action when improvement does not take place, and systems for monitoring attendance are robust.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is not as high as for all pupils in the school or all pupils nationally. Leaders have identified that there is still more work to do to improve the attendance of a small core of disadvantaged pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2017 and 2018, pupils made broadly average progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, by the end of key stage 4. Published outcomes in 2018 showed significant improvements in humanities subjects, where pupils made above-average progress. Pupils attainment overall was broadly in line with national averages in both years.
- The proportion of pupils entered for and achieving pass grades in subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) was lower than in most secondary schools in 2017 and 2018. There are greater proportions entered for the EBacc in the current Year 11 and Year 10, because leaders have ensured that pupils receive better advice and guidance before choosing their option subjects.
- Pupils achieve qualifications that match their aspirations and provide a firm foundation for employment or future study. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are not in education, employment or training when they leave the school is below the national average.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of learning indicate that most pupils currently in the school are making strong progress across the curriculum, because of effective and improving teaching, learning and assessment.
- Generally, pupils of different abilities, including the most able pupils, make good progress. This is because teachers provide them with appropriately challenging activities that stretch pupils to demonstrate deeper understanding of their learning.
- Pupils with SEND typically make strong progress. This is because teachers and additional adults know individual pupils' barriers to learning well. They provide help and make adjustments so that pupils can access activities that are appropriately challenging for their ability.

- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils was well below that of other pupils nationally in a range of subjects in 2017. Despite some improvements in 2018, disadvantaged pupils' progress remained significantly below that of other pupils nationally, including in English and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are making improved progress because of better teaching, focused support and raised expectations. Many, particularly in key stage 3, are making progress that is in line with that of other pupils with similar starting points.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership of the sixth form is effective and has ensured that the programmes offered currently meet students' needs and future aspirations. This has led to a growth in the number of students studying at Bishop Laney Sixth Form.
- The sixth form currently offers a range of vocational courses and technical courses, and A levels in mathematics and English. A collaborative programme with Norwich City Football Club provides students with opportunities to continue their studies while training and playing football at a professional level. There is also a level 2 pathway, part-funded by the Fenland and East Cambridgeshire Opportunity Area, to increase post-16 study options and provide an additional route to level 3 study.
- Almost all students successfully complete their programmes of study and progress to higher education, apprenticeships or employment.
- Teaching in the sixth form is effective, although students say that there has been some variation in the quality of teaching experienced due to changes in teaching staff. Teachers provide insightful guidance which supports students' learning and progress. Teachers track students' progress closely and intervene to support any student who is falling behind. As a result, most students make good progress.
- Students experience a wide variety of activities to support their personal development and welfare through the sixth-form PLEDGES plus programme. They have the opportunity to work with a business mentor from the local community and undertake relevant work-related learning. Students value the information and guidance provided before and during their sixth-form studies to help them make appropriate choices about future study and careers.
- Students have opportunities to complete life skills programmes. These include first aid, a range of sporting activities, a variety of volunteering and charitable activities and clubs and societies such as Young Enterprise, film club or the debating society. The sixth-form council organises a number of events for students, including a mental health awareness day, and provides a means of sharing students' views with leaders.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is good. Students develop positive attitudes and study skills that support learning. They arrive promptly to lessons and attend regularly, though their attendance is not as high as for other year groups in the school.
- In 2017 and 2018, students' achievement in vocational courses was broadly in line with the national average overall. Disadvantaged students' achievement was better than that of others nationally. The small number of students completing technical certificates achieve well. Students currently in the school typically make good progress in their chosen subjects.

- There is good support for students who did not attain a standard pass in GCSE English or mathematics when in Year 11. These students make above-average progress compared with similar students nationally and improve their grades.
- The school did not offer A levels in 2017/18. Students who completed A-level courses in 2017 made significantly less progress than similar students nationally.
- Following careful consideration, leaders have decided to re-introduce a small number of additional A-level courses from September 2019. They have ensured that staff have received relevant training and support, so that they are fully prepared for teaching these courses. Leaders have identified that closer checks on the sixth-form provision are needed to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of students and supports them to achieve well.

School details

Unique reference number	143404
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10087456

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1102
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	95
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Shirley Jamieson
Principal	Richard Spencer
Telephone number	01353 667 763
Website	www.elycollege.com
Email address	mailto:office@elycollege.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

Information about this school

- Ely College is a larger-than-average-sized 11–18 secondary school. The school opened as part of Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust on 1 September 2016. The predecessor school, also named Ely College, was judged to require special measures when it was inspected in February 2015. The board of trustees is responsible for governance of the school, with some powers delegated to a local governing body, known as the academy council.
- The principal and vice-principals were appointed by the trust. The trust provides support for the school through members of its central team and training and professional development opportunities, including subject-leader networks and support

for governors. The trust also regularly monitors the work of leaders and governors. The school works collaboratively with other schools in the trust.

- The school's post-16 provision Bishop Laney Sixth Form was established in 2016 in collaboration with the Staploe Education Trust. It is led, managed and staffed by Ely College. It provides post-16 study programmes for Cambridge Area Partnership. The school works in partnership with Norwich City football club to provide the Norwich City regional development college football programme.
- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is slightly lower than in most secondary schools. The proportion of pupils with SEND is broadly average, including pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses alternative provision provided by Cambridge Regional College and West Suffolk College for a small number of pupils. The school also uses Academy 21 and Tutor My Kids for any pupils who require one-to-one or home tuition.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school. Some of these observations took place with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors listened to a small group of key stage 3 pupils reading, observed an assembly, visited intervention sessions for pupils with SEND and visited The Hub.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, members of the academy council and the chief executive and executive leader for special educational needs from the trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the self-evaluation summary, the school’s development plan, minutes of meetings of the academy council, safeguarding records, school assessment information, attendance and behaviour records, and school policies and procedures.
- Formal discussions were held with groups of pupils from each key stage to discuss their experiences of school. Inspectors also spoke to pupils in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Inspectors also took account of the 348 responses from Ofsted’s online pupil questionnaire and two surveys conducted by the school, each of approximately 800 pupils.
- Inspectors analysed the 220 responses from Ofsted’s online survey of parents Parent View, including the free-text commentary provided by 217 parents.
- Inspectors also considered the 71 responses to Ofsted’s online staff survey and met with a group of staff.
- During the inspection, Year 11 pupils were taking GCSE examinations. A group of Year 10 pupils were participating in a geography field trip.

Inspection team

Paul Wilson, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Sally Garrett	Ofsted Inspector
Georgina Atkinson	Ofsted Inspector
Gerard Batty	Ofsted Inspector
David Hutton	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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