

# Inspection of The Centre School

High Street, Cottenham, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB24 8UA

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Inspection dates: 21 and 22 May 2024

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
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Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
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Personal development	<b>Good</b>
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Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
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Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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The principal of this school is Sue Raven. This school is part of Astrea 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 (CEO), Rowena Hackwood, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Benjamin Brown.

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

Pupils are happy and feel safe at The Centre School. Most pupils join having experienced challenges in education elsewhere. This means that they start with gaps in their knowledge and lack the behaviours they need to learn well. The school helps pupils quickly develop the knowledge and attitudes they need to make positive choices to be successful.

The school has high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Staff understand the specific social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs of pupils. They are patient and caring towards pupils. This creates a warm and welcoming atmosphere throughout the school. This helps pupils, and students in the sixth form, to engage positively with their learning.

Pupils benefit from high-quality personal development. This includes the extended curriculum and a range of other opportunities such as regular residential trips and curriculum visits at home and abroad. These introduce pupils to new experiences and opportunities. Pupils value their personal, social, health and economic education lessons. These help pupils learn how to avoid risks, make safer choices and learn about positive relationships. Pupils readily use opportunities to engage in meaningful debates about a wide range of topics such as democracy and representation.

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

The school has designed a bespoke curriculum offer that is well adapted to meet the needs of pupils. Across many subjects, the school has identified the knowledge that pupils should learn. This knowledge has been sequenced in a well-structured curriculum that builds on pupils' varied starting points. Here, pupils secure their understanding of important knowledge. This enables them to produce work of a high quality. In some subjects, the school has not yet identified the important knowledge pupils need to learn as precisely. In these areas, pupils' knowledge is less secure.

Teachers show a passion for their subjects and have strong subject knowledge. They check pupils' understanding with precision and use these checks to adapt their teaching. This helps them to address any misconceptions or gaps in knowledge that pupils have.

With the support of the trust, the reading curriculum has been strengthened in recent years. This includes effective phonics teaching. Reading is prioritised across subjects and in basic skills lessons. Those pupils who require support with their reading get effective help. This enables them to read well and learn the curriculum successfully.

The school focuses on pupils building positive relationships with staff and each other. This creates a culture of mutual respect where pupils feel valued. As a result, lessons are purposeful and focused on learning. Staff are well trained and supported

by the school to address behaviour that falls short of the school's expectations. Pupils value rewards and other incentives that the school has created to promote positive behaviour. They work hard to achieve these.

Many pupils join the school with low attendance. The school uses tailored approaches to help support pupils and their families in securing good attendance. This is helping most pupils to attend regularly. The school regularly reviews and adjusts its approaches to help pupils improve their attendance.

The extended curriculum greatly contributes to pupils' personal development and wider skills. Pupils are enthused by the wide range of activities and other opportunities that feature within this programme. This includes working on the school farm, fishing, cooking and visits to a local gym. The school is working to increase the number of accreditations that pupils can achieve through this programme.

The school has made significant changes to the careers curriculum this academic year to strengthen the advice and guidance that pupils receive. This is leading to greater opportunities for pupils to engage with employers and gain experience of the workplace.

The small but growing sixth form is an integral part of the school. Sixth formers and pupils in the main school work alongside each other in many areas of the curriculum. The school ensures that students in the sixth form benefit from visits to local colleges and interactions with different employers. This is helping students make informed choices about their next steps into further education or employment.

Staff feel valued and well supported by the school. The school helps staff to manage their own workload. The trust understands the specialist nature of the school. It provides effective support to help the school meet the needs of pupils well.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In some areas of the curriculum, the school has not identified the specific knowledge that pupils need to learn. This can prevent pupils from securing the knowledge they need to aid in new learning. The school should ensure that it identifies, with precision, the knowledge that pupils should learn across all areas of the curriculum.

## 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>	137594
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10323712
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 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>	132
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	14
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Benjamin Brown
<b>CEO</b>	Rowena Hackwood
<b>Principal</b>	Sue Raven
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.astreacentreschool.org">www.astreacentreschool.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20 October 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of Astrea Academy Trust.
- The school is on the same site as Cottenham Village College.
- The school uses nine unregistered alternative providers.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan and SEMH needs.
- 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

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.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector also met with the CEO of the multi-academy trust, the chair of the local governing committee and representatives from the board of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, physical education, science and the extended curriculum. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work from these subjects.
- 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 considered responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire. They also considered responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

## Inspection team

Marc White, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Clare Gammons

Ofsted Inspector

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