

Inspection of Melbourn Village College

The Moor, Melbourn, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 6EF

Inspection dates:	13 and 14 May 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Inadequate

The principal of this school is Rachel Spencer. This school is part of The CAM 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), Claire Heald, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sue Williamson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school and are delighted by the improvements that have been made. They enjoy coming to Melbourn Village College to learn and to spend time with their friends. They feel settled because staff share clear and consistent expectations for behaviour and learning. Many value the wider opportunities on offer, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the chance to visit China through the Mandarin Excellence Programme. However, other pupils do not take advantage of wider opportunities and therefore do not consistently benefit from different experiences.

Many pupils achieve well. This is because they often benefit from learning a well-planned and well-taught curriculum. However, pupils' experiences of learning are not consistently strong across the school. Sometimes, pupils do not get the right support to help them meet the ambition of the curriculum. When this happens, they do not achieve as well as they could.

Pupils behave well. They know what is expected of them and respond positively to the way staff apply the school rules. Learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils enjoy social times. They feel safe and happy as they chat with their friends, sit quietly or take part in sports and other activities.

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

The school has developed a curriculum that builds on what pupils already know and deepens their understanding over time. In many subjects, particularly where the curriculum is well established, staff deliver lessons well. They explain new ideas clearly and check pupils' understanding before moving on. In the strongest areas, teachers use questioning skilfully to probe pupils' thinking. They help pupils to deepen their understanding and quickly address misconceptions. For example, in Mandarin, pupils are immediately corrected if they mispronounce a word, preventing mistakes from becoming embedded. Here, teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to practise what they have learned. As a result, pupils achieve highly.

However, this is not consistent across the school. In some subjects, teachers do not have a clear enough picture of how well pupils understand the curriculum. The school's systems for checking pupils' learning are not sharp enough. This means that teachers do not always know when pupils are falling behind. Sometimes, they do not address gaps or misunderstandings. This prevents some pupils from achieving as well as they could.

The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is variable. The needs of many pupils with SEND are identified correctly and staff support them well to access their learning. However, this is not consistent. The school does not always identify pupils' needs quickly enough. Systems to check how well pupils with SEND are progressing are not robust. Staff do not always have the guidance they need to support these pupils effectively. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils who attend the school's specially resourced provision for pupils with autism, called 'The Cabin', are well supported. Staff have a clear understanding of how to meet these pupils' needs. Pupils in The Cabin benefit from additional targeted support. Staff check their progress carefully and provide extra time to revisit learning if needed. As a result, these pupils achieve well.

Reading is a clear priority. Pupils who are at the earliest stages of reading are identified quickly. They receive effective support to develop their reading skills. The school checks their progress carefully to ensure that they develop the skills to become fluent readers.

Pupils know how to keep safe. They understand the importance of looking after their mental health. Many benefit from a range of clubs, sports and trips that broaden their experiences beyond the classroom. Pupils learn about different career pathways and the skills they need for their future. However, the school's work to develop pupils' resilience and independence is not well established. Not all pupils benefit equally from opportunities to build their confidence and strength of character.

The trust and school leadership have made rapid improvements. These actions are making a clear difference to pupils' experiences. Staff, pupils and parents recognise the positive impact and are increasingly proud to be part of the school community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained to recognise the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. They report concerns quickly, following clear procedures. Leaders take appropriate action to ensure that pupils get the help they need.

The school works with a range of agencies to keep pupils safe. However, staff do not always have a strong enough understanding of the full range of external and internal support available to pupils and their families. While no child has been placed at risk, on occasion, the support provided has not been as timely or as well matched to individual needs as it could be. This is because the school is not always aware of the different services and sources of help it could draw on. As a result, some pupils and their families do not always receive the most appropriate support at the right time.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not have a consistent approach to checking how well pupils have understood their learning. At times, teachers do not identify when pupils have misconceptions or provide them with the clear, direct feedback they need. As a result, some pupils fall behind and do not know what they need to do to improve. The school should ensure

that staff check pupils' understanding effectively so that pupils receive the right support to make secure progress through the curriculum.

- At times, the school does not identify the needs of pupils with SEND quickly enough. When such pupils are identified, the support provided is not consistently matched to their needs. This means that some pupils with SEND do not get the right help to keep up with their learning. The school should ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are identified promptly so that they are provided with the appropriate support to help them achieve well.
- The school's wider work to build pupils' resilience and confidence is not consistently effective. Some pupils do not benefit fully from the opportunities on offer to help them develop their independence. As a result, they are not as well prepared for their next steps as they could be. The school should ensure that all pupils are supported to develop their strength of character and independence.
- The school does not have a strong enough understanding of the range of support available to pupils and families. This means that some pupils and their families do not get the right help when they need it. The school should strengthen its knowledge of the full range of internal and external support services so that pupils and families receive appropriate and timely help.

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	137527
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10378510
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	580
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sue Williamson
CEO of the trust	Claire Heald
Principal	Rachel Spencer
Website	www.melbournvc.org
Date of previous inspection	17 December 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Melbourn Village College is part of The CAM Academy Trust.
- In January 2025, a new principal joined the school.
- A new CEO joined the trust in June 2024.
- Since the previous graded inspection in 2023, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005, there have been significant changes in the trust and school leadership team.
- An enhanced provision for pupils with autism, known as 'The Cabin', operates within the school. These pupils' learning is divided between The Cabin and main-school classes.
- 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.
- The school uses two registered and two unregistered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, physical education, modern foreign languages and geography. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with trust staff, including the CEO of the trust, the director of school improvement, the director of inclusion and trust SEND director. They also met with the principal and other senior staff.
- An inspector met with the chair of trustees, who is also the chair of governors.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents relating to school improvement and governance, behaviour and attendance, alternative provision, early reading, enrichment, careers and pupils with SEND. They also held meetings with staff with responsibilities in these areas.
- 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 considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. They also spoke to groups of pupils and took into consideration the online staff surveys.

Inspection team

Bessie Owen, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

James Fuller

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