

Inspection of Medeshamstede Academy

Reeves Way, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE1 5LQ

Inspection dates: 17–19 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan due to autism spectrum disorder. Pupils are welcomed into school by caring staff who go out of their way to help them engage in learning, play and enjoy school.

The youngest pupils thrive in the nurturing environment provided for them. Their communication and language skills are developed well. Early reading is taught effectively. High expectations and established routines ensure younger pupils behave well. However, this is not built on and maintained throughout the school.

Pupils feel safe. Bullying does happen, but pupils say they know who to talk with to help them sort things out. A small minority of pupils with different, more complex needs become regularly disinterested in learning. Incidents are not well managed by staff. When there is very challenging behaviour, it disrupts the learning of others. Trust leaders and the local authority (LA) have not worked together well enough to ensure that the school is best placed to meet the needs of these pupils.

The majority of pupils engage well in reading and mathematics. In the afternoons, some disengage from learning because the wider curriculum does not retain their interest. Practical learning in cooking, music, art and design, and wider enrichment activities, which pupils enjoy, are underdeveloped.

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

Leaders have not ensured that the school remains good. Poor relations between the trust and LA have led to increasing numbers of pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs being placed at the school. This has not worked. It has led to significant concerns raised by parents about behaviour and safeguarding. Relations with the LA are at the early stages of improving. There are plans to further improve the site so that the needs of these pupils can be fully met.

The teaching of early communication skills is prioritised. Staff use their good relationships and consistent approaches well to enable verbal and non-verbal primary-aged pupils to interact and make good progress. Early reading is taught using phonics, but this is not fully consistent. New resources and staff training are planned for later this year. Teaching older pupils to read lacks precision. Staff do not clearly identify the support pupils need to enable them to read with confidence, accuracy and fluency.

In mathematics, leaders have set out the content and vocabulary to be taught, and in what order. Staff know how to use the resources to teach mathematics, but show less of an understanding of the school's curriculum pathways and how these are suited to pupils' different abilities. Books show that pupils who remain interested in learning make suitable progress. Those who easily lose interest during lessons make much less progress. Not all pupils develop positive attitudes to learning.

Teachers use a commercial package to teach the wider curriculum. The use and teaching of this package vary widely. Too many pupils become easily distracted in afternoon lessons. The curriculum does not inspire or motivate them. There are too few opportunities for enrichment and enjoyment that are adapted to meet pupils' needs.

Pupils and staff feel safe in school. Most pupils behave themselves. Staff know how to manage their needs. A small minority of older pupils do not behave well enough. Strategies to build relations with them and defuse behaviour incidents have little effect. Expectations of these pupils are too low. Staff feel that the boundaries and consequences for unacceptable behaviour are not always applied consistently. There are suitable logs maintained of incidents where staff are required to physically intervene to defuse a situation.

Pupils and their backgrounds are known well. Pupils appreciate and learn from the personalised, one-to-one support provided for them. They develop an understanding of different relationships and career opportunities through regular personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. Most year 11 pupils move onto further education or training. Pupils have too few opportunities to learn important life skills such as looking after their health and well-being, travelling independently, and managing money.

Leaders have not ensured that some pupils' EHC plans have been reviewed on time. Leaders are improving this situation. They intend to complete all reviews this term.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Experienced leaders oversee systematic procedures to keep pupils safe. Staff are suitably trained in safeguarding. They know what to do if they have concerns about pupils. Electronic recording procedures enable leaders to follow up concerns in a timely way and check regularly that action has been taken to protect pupils from harm. Links with other support agencies are well established.

Following incidents of pupils' behaviour, leaders have taken action to secure the school site. Higher fences are in place to prevent pupils from absconding. There are new locks which enable staff to control access within the buildings and outdoor areas more effectively.

All the necessary checks are made when appointing adults to work with children. The record of these checks is well maintained.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Too many pupils easily disengage from learning in the afternoons because the curriculum fails to inspire or motivate them. There is too much inconsistency in the teaching of the curriculum across a range of subjects. Leaders should review the quality of the wider curriculum. They should use their findings to create a revised curriculum that engages and enthuses pupils and enriches their lives.
- Reading is not taught well enough. Staff do not clearly identify the support older pupils need to fill gaps in their reading skills, and enable them to read with accuracy, confidence and fluency. Leaders should prioritise improvements in reading. They should ensure that all staff gain a full understanding of how to teach reading to older pupils.
- A small proportion of pupils with SEMH needs regularly misbehave. Staff do not manage these incidents well enough. Leaders should implement proven, effective strategies to help staff to manage serious misbehaviour consistently. They should raise their expectations of how all pupils should behave. Leaders should clarify with pupils and their parents what the consequences are for unacceptable behaviour.
- The impact of placing pupils with SEMH needs into the school has not been fully considered. Leaders should ensure that relations with the LA improve and become a firm and fair partnership. They should seek the full support of the LA in meeting plans for improving the school site so that the SEMH needs of these pupils can be fully met.
- Not all parents are fully supportive of the school's work. A significant minority of them expressed concerns during the inspection about pupils' safety and welfare. Leaders should do more to effectively communicate, resolve concerns, and regain the trust of parents.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	138271
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	10238354
Type of school	Special all-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	127
Appropriate authority	Board of Trustees
Chair of trust	Mike Hamlin
Principal (Interim)	Martin Bentham
Website	www.medeshamstedeacademy.org/
Date of previous inspection	15 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has changed its name from City of Peterborough Academy to Medeshamstede Academy.
- The previous executive principal and principal have left the school. An interim principal currently leads the school. A new, substantive executive principal and principal have been appointed to begin in September 2022.
- The school has grown from 96 to 127 pupils.
- It is part of the Greenwood Academy Trust (the Trust).
- The school caters for pupils from Reception class to Year 11.
- All pupils have an EHC plan due to autism spectrum disorder. Pupils are referred to the school by Peterborough and Cambridgeshire local authorities.
- Most pupils are white British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is above average.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with the interim principal, two assistant principals, other senior and middle leaders, teachers, support staff and three groups of pupils. In meetings, the interim principal was accompanied by a strategic director (SEND) from the Trust.
- Inspectors also spoke via remote access with two trustees, the chief executive officer, and the chair of the school's academy council.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into reading, mathematics, PSHE and history. This included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, meetings with staff and pupils, and scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's single central record. They met with the designated leader of safeguarding and a safeguarding leader from the Trust.
- Inspectors considered 31 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, and 31 free texts from parents. There were no responses to Ofsted surveys to gather the views of staff and pupils.

Inspection team

John Mitcheson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Cindy Impey

Her Majesty's Inspector

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