

Dover Christ Church Academy

Melbourne Avenue, Whitfield, Dover, Kent CT16 2EG

Inspection dates

12–13 March 2019

| Overall effectiveness | Requires improvement |
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| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Requires improvement |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Requires improvement |
| 16 to 19 study programmes | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because pupils' progress in 2017 and 2018 was well below that of other pupils nationally and current pupils do not yet make consistently strong progress.
- In key stages 3 and 4, teachers do not consistently provide activities that meet the needs of pupils. Levels of challenge in lessons are variable.
- Attendance is below the national average. Too many pupils are frequently absent from school.
- Leaders do not evaluate the effect of school improvement strategies on pupils' progress as sharply as they could.
- Pupils do not develop their knowledge, skills and understanding well enough across a range of subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Since being appointed, the principal has transformed the school. The curriculum is now broad and balanced. A range of strategies have been put in place to improve teaching and pupils' progress.
- Staff morale is high. Almost all staff feel well supported and are committed to improving the school.
- Pupils behave well and show positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils are well cared for. Relationships between pupils and staff are strong.
- The new assessment system is being increasingly well embedded so that pupils reflect on their work and rectify mistakes.
- The board of trustees ably supports leaders and staff. They have been integral to the recent successful recruitment and training of new teachers.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff are well trained. They work closely with external agencies.
- The sixth form is good because teaching is strong and current students make increasingly strong progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve teaching, learning and assessment, by ensuring that teachers plan activities that consistently provide high challenge and meet pupils' needs.
- Develop the use of pupils' progress information so that leaders can sharpen their assessment of the effectiveness of school improvement plans.
- Improve rates of attendance for pupils and students so that they are at least in line with national averages.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since starting in September 2017, the principal has transformed the school. Although outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment still require improvement, a raft of improvement strategies have been put in place by the principal. These have improved behaviour, pupils' attitudes to learning and staff recruitment.
- Led by the principal, leaders and staff display a sense of moral purpose. They are committed to improving standards and maintaining the school's inclusive ethos.
- The school has experienced significant staff turbulence in recent years: 16 new teachers have joined the school over the past two years. They have been well trained and ably supported by leaders and by the trust.
- Teachers are held to account thoroughly. Performance management procedures have been strengthened so that teachers' targets are focused on improving pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have worked closely with the trust to provide a well-planned training programme for staff. New staff, in particular, receive high-quality training opportunities that ensure that they get up to speed quickly and develop the skills needed to teach effectively. Staff value their training and they appreciate the strong links that the school has with the academy sponsor, Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU).
- Parents and carers fully support leaders. Many commented, in Ofsted's online questionnaire, that the school has undergone improvements since the principal started. One parent commented, 'Since Mr MacLean has taken over as principal, he has improved the school greatly.'
- Extra funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent increasingly effectively. In the past, disadvantaged pupils have not made strong progress. Nevertheless, recent changes to the pupil premium provision mean that current disadvantaged pupils are making better progress.
- Leaders recognise that, in the past, the curriculum has been too narrow, and it has not provided a broad range of opportunities for pupils. However, the curriculum has been reviewed and changed. It is now broad and balanced. For example, more pupils can study a language when they start in Year 7 than was previously the case.
- Staff morale is high. Almost all staff who responded to Ofsted's confidential staff questionnaire believe that the school is led and managed effectively, and that they are well supported. Staff told inspectors that they feel part of a 'cohesive team' with a culture of mutual support among members of staff.
- Leaders monitor their plans for school improvement, making changes when they think that improvement strategies are not working. However, leaders do not routinely use information about pupils' progress to evaluate the effectiveness of their actions. Consequently, leaders' evaluations are not as sharp as they could be.
- Subject leadership is an increasing strength of the school. Subject leaders implement school policies increasingly well. They are committed to ensuring that pupils' progress

improves and are resolute in working together to ensure that strong teaching practice is spread more widely across subjects.

- Leadership of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has improved over the past year. Provision is precisely planned so that extra support is targeted towards pupils who need it.
- The ASPEN 2 provision currently has 46 pupils and students with education, health and care (EHC) plans spread across four classes (including one sixth-form class). The provision is well led and managed.
- Pupils have a sound understanding of British values such as tolerance, the rule of law and democracy. They benefit from personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) tutor sessions. Assemblies address a wide range of issues. Pupils told inspectors that assemblies are thought provoking. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is increasingly effective. Pupils value this part of the curriculum.

Governance of the school

- Members of the board of trustees have a high level of expertise in education. They use this knowledge astutely to support and challenge leaders. In meetings, members ask leaders probing questions.
- Members are dedicated and committed to school improvement. They understand the improvement journey that the school is on. They take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously and several members have completed safer recruitment training.
- Members visit the school regularly. They speak to pupils, look at learning in lessons and have rigorous discussions with leaders. These activities mean that members are well informed about how well the plans for school improvement are implemented.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding practices are well embedded. Leaders are acutely aware of the importance of keeping pupils and students safe. Procedures for checking the suitability of staff are well managed.
- Staff are trained to recognise the signs that pupils or students may be at risk of harm. At the time of the inspection, six members of staff had received the designated safeguarding lead training. Thus, a high level of expertise in safeguarding is evident within the school.
- Leaders liaise well with external agencies. As a result, appropriate support is put in place for vulnerable pupils or pupils at risk of harm. When referrals to local children's services are needed, they are completed quickly and agreed actions are closely monitored by staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across key stages 3 and 4 is improving steadily but is not yet consistently good. There is too much variation in the level of challenge in lessons, the expectations of teachers and the effectiveness of teachers' planning.
- Teachers' expectations are not consistently high. In some subjects, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Consequently, pupils do better in these subjects. However, in too many subjects, pupils do not make strong progress because teachers' expectations are not high enough. In these subjects, activities do not provide high levels of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Pupils do not consistently develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects. In some subjects, pupils have substantial gaps in their knowledge because of weaker teaching in the past. These gaps are not always addressed by strong teaching. In mathematics, for example, pupils do not regularly consolidate their mathematical knowledge, because tasks are not matched well enough to pupils' needs.
- The school's new assessment system is increasingly well embedded. Pupils respond well to teachers' feedback. In several subjects, and particularly in English, pupils improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar through the correction of mistakes and by redrafting written work when improvements are needed.
- Teachers' questioning is not consistently strong across subjects. Some teachers use questioning very effectively. However, too many teachers do not use questioning to find out what pupils understand. Consequently, pupils' misconceptions are not always dealt with well.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are strong. Pupils readily participate in activities and they want to do well. Pupils are positive about their studies. They told inspectors that teaching has improved since new teachers have been employed in the school.
- The development of literacy across the curriculum is becoming increasingly effective. Tutor-time reading programmes have led to improvements in reading levels, particularly for Year 7 pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff work hard to ensure that the school is a caring and nurturing environment. They have a well-developed understanding of the challenges that pupils face inside and outside school. Consequently, staff's support for pupils, and particularly vulnerable pupils, is good.
- Most pupils are proud of their school and they wear their uniform smartly. They treat the school environment with respect and there is little litter.
- Pupils receive good-quality careers advice. They are well informed about their future options because of a range of careers activities. Last year, the school's careers

programme was relaunched, and a new leader was appointed to oversee the provision. A popular work experience programme for Year 10 pupils ensures that pupils develop an increasing awareness of the world of work.

- Staff check regularly on the welfare, progress and attendance of pupils who attend alternative provision. Overall, these pupils improve their behaviour and attendance because of high-quality care, guidance and support.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. Few pupils disrupt learning. Pupils told inspectors that new behaviour policies have been implemented well by staff. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is positive.
- A large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, believe that pupils' behaviour is good. They recognise the positive effects of the changes brought in since the principal started in September 2017.
- Pupils socialise well together. They move sensibly between lessons and they respond well to staff instructions. A small proportion of pupils exhibit boisterous behaviour at times, but this is dealt with effectively by staff.
- Leaders have worked hard to ensure that fixed-term exclusions remain below the national average for secondary schools. Their moral purpose and commitment to inclusion mean that they are passionate about ensuring that pupils, and particularly vulnerable pupils, receive external exclusions only as a last resort.
- Pupils who attend the school's special educational needs provision, ASPEN 2, behave positively because they are adeptly supported by well-trained staff.
- Attendance is still below the national average. However, the improved systems to monitor pupils' absence and to act quickly when pupils are absent mean that attendance is improving steadily.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In the last two years, Year 11 pupils' progress was weak across a range of subjects, particularly in English, mathematics and science. They achieved outcomes well below those of other pupils nationally. This was because of weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Although teaching, learning and assessment are not yet good, improvements in teaching mean that current pupils' progress is improving, particularly in key stage 3.
- Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with starting points that are well below average. New strategies put in place by leaders and better teaching enable increasing proportions of pupils to catch up, particularly in their reading.
- Leaders are aware that disadvantaged pupils do not make as much progress as they should. This has been a key focus for leaders and teachers over the past year.

Teachers are now much more aware of the needs of disadvantaged pupils. However, disadvantaged pupils' progress, although improving, is not yet consistently strong.

- Current pupils with EHC plans make strong progress because of the expert support they receive in ASPEN 2. Teaching is well matched to their needs, and additional adults ably support pupils. Pupils with EHC plans attain appropriate qualifications in Year 11 that prepare them well for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Work in pupils' books shows that pupils are making increasingly better progress in some subjects. In English, for example, pupils in Year 11 redraft written responses after being given advice from their teacher. This enables them to improve their use of vocabulary and their spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, in other subjects, pupils make less strong progress. For example, in mathematics, in Year 11, pupils easily complete classwork and fail to deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts.
- The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision make strong progress so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Last year, students' outcomes were below average at A level and in vocational subjects. However, current students make stronger progress because of good teaching and effective support. Courses in film studies, sociology, and health and social care are particularly successful.
- Leaders have revamped the curriculum so that it takes into account students' ambitions and interests. Fewer students study A levels and more students are choosing to study the recently introduced International Baccalaureate's Career-related Programme (IBCP). The new curriculum in the sixth form now meets the needs of students increasingly well.
- Sixth-form students are an integral part of the school. They are good role models for younger pupils and many participate in leadership opportunities. For example, several students act as 'reading ambassadors'. They work with younger pupils in the morning to improve their reading. Similarly, some students mentor younger pupils. This helps pupils with their organisation or with problems that they have.
- Teaching in the sixth form is strong. Teachers use their well-developed subject knowledge to plan activities that challenge students and encourage them to work independently. For example, in psychology, Year 12 students were enthused by an activity where they had to derive a psychological profile from information about a person's crimes. Similarly, in business, teachers' strong subject knowledge ensures that students have a deep understanding of subject content and how it relates to the final examination.
- While attendance is improving in the sixth form, it is still too low. Leaders are committed to reducing students' absence rates by closely monitoring students with poor attendance. This is beginning to have a positive effect on improving attendance.
- Carefully targeted careers education, guidance and support ensure that students move on to appropriate employment, education or training when they leave the sixth form.

For example, increasing proportions of students go to universities to continue their education. Students are well prepared for their next steps.

- Students feel safe in school and they benefit from the varied opportunities to further their understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Leaders invite a range of external speakers and agencies to speak to students about safety. For example, a theatre production highlighted the dangers of drink-driving.
- Students who do not achieve at least a grade 4 in GCSE English and mathematics undertake further study in these areas. They are provided with teaching and support to improve their grades. However, currently, not enough students go on to secure a standard pass in these qualifications.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 136175 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 10053248 |

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

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| Type of school | Modern (non-selective) |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| 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 | 746 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 91 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Dr John Moss |
| Principal | Jamie MacLean |
| Telephone number | 01304 820126 |
| Website | www.dccacademy.org.uk |
| Email address | info@dccacademy.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 27 March 2018 |

Information about this school

- Dover Christ Church Academy is the sole member of the Dover Christ Church Academy Trust. The board of trustees is the accountable body for the school. The trust has worked with school leaders to provide strategic direction in order to improve the school.
- The school is sponsored by Canterbury Christ Church University.
- A small number of pupils attend an alternative provider, East Kent Learning Alliance.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British background.

- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is above the national average for secondary schools.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average for secondary schools.
- The school provides specially resourced provision known as ASPEN 2 for 46 pupils with special educational needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons across key stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form. In several observations, senior leaders joined inspectors.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, the principal and the chair of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors formally met with groups of pupils from across the whole school. Inspectors also spoke to a wide range of pupils during social times and during lessons. Inspectors also considered the views of 169 pupils who responded to the confidential pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff from meetings with groups of staff and from the 72 staff who responded to the confidential staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 45 parents who responded to the confidential Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, including 44 written responses.
- Documentation was scrutinised by inspectors, including the school's plans for improvement, its self-evaluation, reports on attendance and behaviour, records relating to pupils' safety, minutes of the board of trustees' meetings and information on pupils' outcomes.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Harry Ingham, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Philip Storey | Ofsted Inspector |
| Scott Norman | Ofsted Inspector |
| Eliot Hodges | Ofsted Inspector |

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