

Inspection of The Canterbury Academy

Knight Avenue, Canterbury, Kent CT2 8QA

Inspection dates: 21 to 22 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders' mantra to 'catch pupils in, rather than out' is clearly seen in their broad curriculum offer. In some subjects, leaders' ambitions are clearly being realised. In other subjects, leaders are increasing the consistency and ambition for all pupils so that they can all achieve well. The curriculum, built around four vibrant key pillars, provides pathways for pupils that some might not have had. This is complemented by a broad array of extra-curricular opportunities, including charity work and overseas visits to further enrich pupils' education. Leaders are determined to develop and celebrate a range of pupils' talents. As one parent commented, 'Staff encourage their students to be the best they can be and give them amazing opportunities along the way.'

Most relationships between staff and pupils are respectful, and pupils respond appropriately to the behaviour policy. However, there are some lessons and social times when behaviour falls below leaders' high expectations and is not managed consistently and effectively.

Pupils are confident that staff deal with any bullying concerns quickly and effectively. Most pupils are also confident to talk to a trusted adult about any concerns about their safety that they might have. As a result, pupils feel safe at school. However, leaders are aware that the quality of record-keeping for safeguarding concerns is not always detailed enough.

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

Leaders pride themselves on 'being a school for all talents' and providing a curriculum that is fully inclusive. In subjects including art and food technology, pupils are provided with clear explanations and models to help them understand what they are being taught. Teachers also check carefully what pupils can remember and adapt their teaching to ensure that pupils are not moved on to new learning too quickly. This is also seen across many subjects in the sixth form. However, in some subjects, leaders' ambitions are not yet realised. This means that although there is often a clear vision for what leaders want pupils to achieve, this is not yet the lived experience for all pupils. Leaders have not yet ensured that the curriculum is consistently implemented across all year groups. Furthermore, in key stage 3, some pupils learn different content from others. Leaders are taking steps to ensure that teaching groups that include lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) include content that is equally ambitious and supports pupils to access a range of subjects at key stage 4. Pupils with SEND are identified accurately and supported well in most lessons. In the specially resourced provisions for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision), pupils are particularly well supported during lessons.

Leaders are keen to engage pupils in reading. There are a variety of methods to encourage pupils to be active readers. Leaders have also identified those pupils who

are struggling to read. However, they are not yet benefiting from a clear and timely approach to improve their reading confidence and fluency swiftly.

Attendance has been an area on which leaders have been focusing since the previous inspection. There are still too many pupils who do not attend school regularly, in particular students in the sixth form and pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Leaders are taking action to address attendance concerns but there has not yet been demonstrable and sustainable improvement.

The majority of pupils are polite and are keen to do well at school. There are some pupils and staff who do share concerns about pupils' behaviour. Some low-level disengagement and conduct are not managed consistently and effectively across the school. However, student conduct and attitudes to learning are consistently stronger in the sixth form, especially when students' knowledge is secure and they can access the tasks that they are being set during lessons.

'Core' lessons and tutor time provide pupils with important context-specific knowledge about staying safe and how to make informed decisions about their futures. This is age appropriate, and pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of the key principles that they learn about, including internet safety and healthy relationships. Pupils across all age groups are also provided with clear careers-related guidance to help them to make informed decisions about their futures.

Pupils are ambitious for their future and value the opportunities that they are given in school to broaden and develop their interests and talents. They enjoy the range of extra-curricular activities that are available. They also value the bespoke 'Pillars lessons', which allow them to deepen their knowledge, for example in areas of sport or performing arts. Students in the sixth form particularly enjoy the highly inclusive approach to their education.

Staff are proud to work at the school, including early career teachers who value the bespoke support that they receive. Members of the local governing board and the board of directors are united in their ambition to provide broad opportunities to all pupils. However, they do not yet have a fully accurate view of the areas that need prioritising within the school. This means that weaknesses in some areas, including attendance and the recording of safeguarding, have not been addressed urgently.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe at school. They know how to report any concerns that they might have, either by speaking to a trusted adult or reporting via a recently introduced QR code. Pupils trust that their concerns will be taken seriously. Leaders work closely with families and external agencies to ensure that pupils in their care receive the support that they need.

There are minor weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements. Not all records are sufficiently detailed; therefore they do not contain a clear account of all actions that leaders have taken and subsequent outcomes. Leaders are taking action to put in place robust checks to monitor and improve the quality of safeguarding records.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders are taking action to improve attendance and this demonstrates some small and recent improvements. However, too many pupils do not attend school often enough. As a result, pupils are missing important learning opportunities. Leaders must accelerate their work to raise attendance by reviewing their approaches so that pupils are in school more consistently and benefiting from full-time education.
- Written safeguarding records do not always accurately provide all details of the actions that leaders have taken and their outcomes. This means that some records do not always provide a clear and coherent account of all relevant and important details. Leaders must ensure that training and closer monitoring takes place to improve the quality of record-keeping.
- Governors' strategic oversight of some aspects of the school's work is not sufficiently robust, particularly around attendance and aspects of safeguarding. This means that governors' monitoring processes are not yet providing them with the detail that they require to hold leaders to account. Governors need to put in place stronger systems to enable them to have clearer and more detailed oversight of the school's actions and impacts.
- In some subjects, the activities that are selected to teach specific content are not well matched to the prior knowledge that pupils have. As a result, not all pupils learn the curriculum as well as they could, because they do not have the pre-requisite knowledge that they need to access the learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers are provided with the training they need to support all pupils to access and achieve well within the curriculum.
- Leaders have not yet ensured consistent high expectations for behaviour across the school. This means that there is variability in staff managing low-level disruption, disengagement in lessons and behaviour that falls short of leaders' high expectations during unstructured times. Leaders must ensure that they effectively communicate their expectations for behaviour and that all staff receive appropriate training on how to consistently implement the behaviour policy.
- Some pupils who struggle to read are not yet being provided with systematic support to read confidently and fluently. This means that some pupils struggle to access the learning intended in some lessons. Leaders need to ensure that pupils struggling to read receive timely and well-structured additional support and that their progress is carefully monitored to ensure that they develop their confidence and fluency as quickly as possible.

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](#)' 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	136302
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10271249
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,841
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	726
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Mark Johnstone
Principal	Jon Watson (executive Principal)
Website	www.canterbury.kent.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	11 and 12 October 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Canterbury Academy Trust.
- The school currently uses one alternative provision, which is part of the academy trust.
- The school has three specially resourced provisions. These are specific for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, hearing impairment and speech, language and communication needs.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, languages, music and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the subject leader, observed pupils at work, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. Inspectors also visited additional lessons in the sixth form and looked at curriculum documentation and visited lessons in art and food technology.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive principal and other leaders from in the school and across the trust. The lead inspector also held meetings with members of the board of directors and the local governing body.
- The inspection team reviewed a range of documentation and relevant school policies, including leaders' own evaluation of the effectiveness of the school and their plans for further improvement.
- Inspectors talked to a wide range of pupils and observed their behaviour in lessons and during social times.
- Safeguarding records were scrutinised, including the single central record, records of referrals and evidence of leaders' actions. Inspectors spoke to many staff and pupils about this area of the school's work.
- Inspectors considered 185 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including 97 free-text comments. Inspectors also took account of 126 responses to the staff survey and 164 responses to the pupil survey. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils to gather their views.

Inspection team

Hanna Miller, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Judy Rider	Ofsted Inspector
Eliot Hodges	Ofsted Inspector
Lorraine Clarke OBE	Ofsted Inspector
Joe Richardson	Ofsted Inspector

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