

Dover Christ Church Academy

Melbourne Avenue, Whitfield, Dover, CT16 2EG

Inspection dates 24–25 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Weak teaching in some lessons means that some students do not learn as well as they should and do not make good progress. A small number of students do not engage in lessons and so do not do their best.
- Students' reading, writing and comprehension skills are not improved routinely in subjects other than English. Teachers do not give enough emphasis to developing students' ability to learn for themselves.
- Attendance has improved but there are still too many students who do not attend regularly, and this prevents them from achieving as well as they should.
- Leaders and managers have brought about improvement in the academy but governors do not challenge the academy's senior leaders sufficiently. They do not ask searching questions about the progress that is being made in developing teaching and learning.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Students in the sixth form do not make good progress in some subjects in relation to their starting points and abilities. The small size of the sixth form limits the range of courses that can be offered.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders check carefully how well students are learning. They know whether the actions they are taking to improve teaching are helping students to reach higher standards.
- Students feel safe and are cared for well.
- Students know how to keep themselves and others safe and manage risks they might encounter. The academy is a welcoming community where students are encouraged to respect each other, regardless of their differences.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons, looked at students’ work, listened to students reading and talked to them about their work.
- They discussed professional development, performance management and the effectiveness of teaching and learning with teachers and other staff.
- Inspectors reviewed documents relating to governance, school improvement and the monitoring of teaching. Inspectors also examined records relating to behaviour and attendance and analysed the school’s assessment data.
- They held a conversation with the Chair of the Governing Body and held discussions with four different groups of students and school leaders and managers.
- Inspectors also took account of 54 inspection questionnaires completed by school staff, recent questionnaires used by the school to gather students’ and parents’ and carers’ views, and 13 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Year 11 students were on work experience during the inspection.

Inspection team

Robert Ellis, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Rosemarie McCarthy

Additional inspector

Sandra Teacher

Additional inspector

Jason Wye

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is an average-sized secondary school with a small sixth form which opened in September 2010 with specialisms of music, mathematics and computing.
- The academy has a specialist unit, known as Aspen 2, which caters for students who have profound, severe and complex educational needs.
- The proportion of students who have disabilities and/or special educational needs is almost double the national average; these are predominantly behaviour, emotional and social difficulties.
- Most pupils are White British and few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is high. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils entitled to free school meals, for children in local authority care and for pupils with a parent in the armed forces.
- The academy's recent GCSE results do not meet the government's floor standard, which is the minimum level expected for students' attainment and progress.
- The school has recently had a new principal.
- A few students attend some classes at the local grammar schools.
- The academy has experienced difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified and experienced teachers of English and mathematics. Some posts in these subjects are filled on a temporary basis.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the leadership and management of the academy by:
 - undertaking an external review of governance to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved
 - developing the skills of subject leaders so there is a more consistent approach to improving teaching and learning and sharing good practice.
- Improve students' results and their progress by:
 - planning lessons which inspire students to be active participants and motivated learners
 - challenging the most able students by giving them more demanding work which encourages them to think for themselves
 - using technology more effectively so that students can develop their information and communication technology skills and improve their ability to work independently
 - developing a consistent approach to improving students' reading, writing and comprehension skills across all subjects
 - working with other schools to improve sixth form provision.
- Using appropriate rewards and sanctions to challenge and support students who do not attend regularly so that their attendance improves.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter the academy with knowledge, skills and understanding that are well below national expectations for their ages. Some students have cognitive difficulties which limit their attainment to levels below national expectations.
- The proportion of students achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has improved but remains below the national average.
- The academy has introduced a number of initiatives to support students who are at risk of not doing well, including those eligible for the pupil premium. Additional staff have been employed and the impact of their work has resulted in the rate of improvement at GCSE being higher for those students who received extra help compared with those who did not.
- The gaps in average point scores, a measure used to compare overall GCSE attainment between all the different groups of students, including those who are eligible for free school meals, are closing rapidly. The academy monitors these groups closely and has convincing evidence to demonstrate the positive impact of the action that has been taken to enable these groups to improve their attainment.
- Some students achieve well in the sixth form but students' progress is too uneven across subjects. Results in 2012 showed improvement compared with the previous year but are below the national average.
- Students' key skills are developed well through the 'A+' curriculum which is taught to the younger students. However, students other than those who have specific special educational needs do not have enough consistent support and guidance to develop their speaking, listening, writing and reading skills.
- Most current students are making better-than-expected progress and are on track to achieve challenging targets. Despite their low starting points, many younger students are already working at the expected levels for their ages.
- The progress of students who have disabilities and/or special educational needs, including those in the Aspen Unit, has improved and many students are now making good progress in relation to their starting points and abilities.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is too inconsistent and there are pockets of weaker teaching which prevent teaching overall from being good or better. Nevertheless, recent improvements to teaching mean that students now get good or outstanding teaching in the majority of their lessons, and they respond well to challenging and interesting work.
- In the lessons that require improvement, teachers spend too long explaining and do not allow students enough time to do their individual work. Consequently, they do not practise their skills and develop their understanding, and this limits their learning. These lessons are often pedestrian and students sometimes become bored and restless.
- Students are very positive about the feedback that they get from most teachers. The marking of students' work is helpful in telling them how to improve. Most students have good opportunities to review their own work and that of others. This helps them to develop their independence and ability to judge their own performance accurately.
- Teachers can measure the progress that students make and swiftly address any potential underperformance because they carry out regular and well-organised checks. Most teachers use searching questions that test students' understanding and support their learning.
- In some lessons, the most able students are not given enough opportunity to tackle realistic problems which require them to think for themselves. Students often rely on adults for help and teachers have only recently begun to enable them to work by themselves.

- Teachers use a wide range of resources to support students' learning but some students, for example, those with disabilities or learning difficulties, sometimes miss out because specialist equipment that would allow them to be more involved in lessons is not used. Most classrooms have access to information and communication technology but teachers do not routinely make the best use of these resources.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- Behaviour around the academy is often good and students feel that behaviour has improved a lot over the last year. This view is supported by a significant drop in exclusions and recorded incidents of poor behaviour.
- Students say that they feel safe and cared for well. Those who spoke with inspectors are confident that any concerns they raise will be taken seriously and will be dealt with.
- Students are clear about what is expected of them and how they should treat others. There is a calm and relaxed atmosphere throughout the academy most of the time. Students told inspectors that discrimination and bullying are not tolerated. Disabled students and other groups socialise and work together well.
- Attendance has risen from well below to close to the national average. The academy has been particularly successful in improving the attendance of students for whom it was previously very poor. Despite these successes, improving attendance remains a priority.
- The positive and caring ethos being developed supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. A good range of after-school activities enables students to explore their potential and there are opportunities for them to take responsibility as 'buddies', helping other students, or as prefects.
- Students demonstrate that they understand the risks that they might encounter and how to deal with them. They told inspectors that they know how to stay safe on the internet and what they should do if they are subjected to social networking, telephone or email abuse.
- A small minority of students do not give lessons their full attention and do not behave in a way that supports their learning. Teachers and parents and carers raised some concerns about how behaviour is managed. Inspectors found that inappropriate behaviour did not happen often and was often linked to weaker teaching. Most teachers demonstrate that they have effective ways of dealing with poor behaviour.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- The principal and senior leaders have worked hard to tackle weaker teaching. As a result, the standards achieved by current students are rising. Teaching has improved and most teachers are helping students catch up quickly.
- The majority of staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire felt that the leaders and managers are doing all they can to improve teaching and learning, but a few felt that more could be done to help their professional development.
- Senior leaders rigorously check and evaluate the academy's work and use the information to plan the next stages of its improvement. The leaders scrutinise teaching particularly thoroughly. There is a clear link between the management of teachers' performance and improvements in students' results.
- The range of subjects taught and other activities have been designed around what current students need and what they say they are interested in. Subjects are grouped together and, at the group level, are led and managed well. Individual subjects are not all led well; some leaders are new in post and not yet able to bring about rapid improvement in their subjects.
- A small number of students are able to have their choice of subjects by attending lessons at other local schools. This use of alternative teaching is effective and enables students to pursue

their particular interests.

- The small size of the sixth form limits the range of subjects that can be offered cost-effectively. The academy is exploring partnerships to see whether it can offer a broader range of qualifications. However, the current sixth form curriculum meets the needs of most of the students.
- The academy has developed good and productive partnerships with other schools, local businesses and education, care and health professionals to support pupils' learning and personal development. External providers have been used well to develop leadership and management skills in the academy and to improve teaching.
- The views of students, parents and carers are sought regularly. Academy and inspection evidence shows that most have few, if any, complaints. The academy is working closely with parents and carers to keep them informed and help them to support their children's learning.
- The academy's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and adults who work with the students receive regular and appropriate training in safeguarding.
- Improvement since the monitoring inspection in November 2011 demonstrates that the academy has the capacity for continuing improvement.

■ **The governance of the school**

Governors ensure that students are kept safe and finances are managed effectively. They provide suitable strategic direction and have been closely involved in planning new accommodation for the academy. However, governors are not asking enough searching questions of the academy's leaders about how students are taught and how well they are doing. The governing body does not demonstrate enough capacity to interpret and judge the performance data provided by academy staff. Governors are not sufficiently involved in judging the academy's performance and keeping a close check on how teachers' performance is managed.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	36175
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	399792

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	682
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Moss
Principal	Sam Williamson
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01304 820126
Fax number	01304 821915
Email address	principal @dccacademy.org.uk

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