

Hugh Christie Technology College

White Cottage Road, Tonbridge, Kent, TN10 4PU

Inspection dates 23–24 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students enter the school with standards which are significantly below the national average. As a result of good teaching they make good progress overall by the end of Year 11.
- Teaching is consistently good and some is outstanding. As a result students are very focused on their learning. They concentrate very well in lessons and give teachers their full attention.
- Teachers' planning, subject knowledge, assessment and questioning are significant strengths. Relationships are strong and there is an enthusiastic atmosphere for learning.
- Behaviour is good. Students behave well in lessons and their conduct around the school is respectful and welcoming to adults and visitors. Students feel very safe.
- The sixth form is good because although students' prior attainment is low, they make very good progress in most subjects on academic and vocational courses. The value added is high.
- The school develops students' reading well in all subjects but particularly in the Years 7 and 8 integrated curriculum.
- Senior and middle leaders and governors have developed very effective systems for checking teaching, behaviour and students' progress. As a result, standards have improved and are now good..
- At the same time, they always focus on the needs and aspirations of students as individuals. As a result, students and parents and carers are fiercely loyal and proud of the school. One parent or carer said that in this school her child could 'be who he wants to be.'

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- In some lessons teachers do not give students enough opportunities to develop their writing.
- In a few lessons all students do the same work, which is not hard enough to enable some groups of students to achieve their best.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 lessons of which seven were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons to evaluate the provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the achievement of students supported by the pupil premium funding.
- Inspectors scrutinised students' work in meetings with subject leaders for English, mathematics, science and technology.
- Meetings were held with middle and senior leaders, and representatives of the governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to parents and carers at a Year 8 parents' evening and met with representatives of the school's Parent Forum and the Friends of Hugh Christie. An inspector spoke on the phone to two parents or carers at their request.
- Three groups of students talked to inspectors about their views of the school.
- Inspectors took account of 88 responses to Parent View (the online parent survey) and 43 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including attainment and progress data, school evaluation records, development plans, performance management information, minutes of governing body meetings and records of safeguarding, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school at change of lesson, break and lunchtime; they spoke informally to students and visited an advisory session.

Inspection team

Janet Hallett, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Roger Fenwick	Additional Inspector
Michael Sutherland-Harper	Additional Inspector
Ruth Symington	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hugh Christie Technology College is a larger than average sized, non-selective school in a county where one in four students attends selective schools. In this area of West Kent the proportion is higher.
- The school is federated with Long Mead Primary School, as The Tonbridge Federation. The schools have the same executive principal and governing body. In addition to the federation, the school has partnerships with other local primary, special and secondary schools. The executive principal is a Local Leader in Education (LLE).
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and service family children) is above the national average. Currently at the school there are a few looked after children and no children from service families.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is low compared with most schools. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is just above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Years 7 and 8 have an integrated curriculum for part of their timetable. This is REAL (Relevant, Engaging, Active Learning).
- About 40 students are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding which is for students who did not achieve the expected levels in reading and mathematics at the end of primary school.
- The school has its own provision for students at risk of exclusion, the Lighthouse, within the federation.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding so that the level of challenge in all lessons is consistent with the best practice in the school by:
 - providing more opportunities for students to discuss their work so that it is easier for them to put their thoughts down on paper and write more fluent sentences in extended writing
 - always giving groups of students work which is appropriate for their ability and stretches them so that they learn better.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school with attainment that is significantly below the national average. As a result of good teaching, by the end of Year 11 they make overall progress, which is broadly in line with the national average. This is for almost all groups of students except boys, whose progress is significantly above national figures.
- Students are making good progress in mathematics, in line with national figures. For English, the proportion of students making good progress has improved rapidly. Although not yet in line with national figures, secure GCSE grades for the current Year 11 cohort and school progress data indicate that this better progress will continue.
- The most able students achieve five A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics, in line with the national figure for their ability range. As in English and mathematics, students' progress is improving in other subjects and the school is addressing underachievement in them through a range of interventions and enrichment opportunities.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form is good. The number of students continuing their courses into Year 13 is well above the national picture and there has been a rising trend of improvement in achievement over time so that it is now one of the best performing sixth forms nationally for progress. This is as a result of good teaching, effective student guidance and strong systems for tracking students' progress.
- The achievement of students eligible for support through pupil premium funding is improving and gaps have closed significantly over time. Although the gap widened again to about one GCSE grade for English and mathematics in 2013, it is on track to close again in 2014. Pupil premium funding is having a significant impact on achievement in English and mathematics in Key Stage 3.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is improving in line with the cohort overall. More of these students are making expected progress in English and mathematics. Outcomes are particularly strong in Key Stage 3, where a range of interventions, supported by specialist staff across the federation and through REAL in Years 7 and 8, are having a positive impact.
- The school makes good use of the Year 7 catch-up funding and is fully committed to improving reading so that students can better access learning in all subjects. A phonics programme has had a significant impact and raised reading ages significantly. The governors have dedicated funding to buying a book for all students when they join the school and on their birthday in Year 8. Students are very proud of their reading and they enjoyed showing inspectors how they record the books they have read and make choices about new ones.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is consistently good and enables students to achieve well. It is not outstanding because not all teaching enables pupils to make rapid progress.
- In the best lessons, teachers set high expectations and, in most of them, there is a high level of challenge for students. In a Year 13 business studies lesson, for example, students evaluated the finances of the London Dungeon. The pace was rapid, the teacher insisted on full sentence answers and the group work was dynamic; it built students' understanding very effectively. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they plan interesting and engaging lessons with high-quality whiteboard presentations and relevant video clips and resources for students. In a Year 10 geography lesson, for instance, students watched a video about surviving in the Australian outback as part of their work on desert environments. The teacher paused the video frequently to check on students' understanding and provided a writing frame to support their note taking.
- Teachers check students' progress well. They ask targeted questions to individual students and

more open questions to promote group and class discussion. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, working in groups, students were highly engaged in solving problems about the percentage thinning of the Antarctic ice cap. The teacher constantly rephrased students' questions to develop their problem-solving skills further so that they could find the answer themselves.

- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are making better progress and developing confidence, as a result of effective specialist support and deployment of teaching assistants. In a Year 8 REAL lesson, students had written from the perspective of their chosen animal. A student with special educational needs was confident to read aloud to the class from their own writing, 'A view of a shark'.
- The literacy policy is consistently applied; teachers in all subjects regularly correct spelling and punctuation. As a result students take pride in the presentation of their work, books are cared for and very little work is unfinished. The school recognises that it needs to broaden its literacy priority to include a greater emphasis on talk and writing because not all students achieve well enough in extended writing.
- Marking and assessment are consistent across the school. Teachers make effective use of next steps assessment but in some subjects not enough time is given for students to reflect and respond to the written comments they receive.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Leaders at all levels have worked hard to secure improved behaviour since the last inspection. The behaviour policy is consistently implemented and has a positive impact on students' behaviour in lessons and around the school. Students and parents and carers say that behaviour has improved and this is supported by school data. Behaviour is not outstanding because students do not yet take enough responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Students' attitudes to learning are positive. They enjoy the modern design of the school, which facilitates good quality learning, and they respond in a mature manner. Inspectors were struck by the sustained levels of concentration in classes. There were only a few instances where students lacked focus and their attention wandered.
- Relationships between students and between students and adults are good. Students are clear what is expected of them and the school deploys a range of staff to support students in reaching those expectations. During a very wet lunchtime, in a crowded dining hall, students' standards of behaviour remained high.
- Bullying is uncommon and students say that they know what to do and can talk to their advisers and staff in students' services. The incidents are dealt with well. The school promotes anti-bullying through assemblies.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students feel safe in school and on the bus journey to and from school. Students understand how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and have had support through information and communication technology (ICT) lessons and advisory sessions.
- Attendance has improved. In the present academic year overall attendance is higher than in the equivalent period last year for boys and girls and is currently above the national average overall. Persistent absence has also reduced.
- The attendance of pupil premium students is better than the national figures for similar students. The attendance of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is broadly in line with national figures for the group. Students enjoy coming to school.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions and permanent exclusions is reducing for all groups of students. The school recognises that it has more work to do but has already taken steps to improve the provision so that students can reflect on the behaviour and reintegrate into school more successfully.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive principal, senior team and governors have developed a clear direction of the school. Actions have been strategically planned and supported by clear policies and strong systems to deliver improved and sustainable outcomes for students. Staff feedback supports the view of strong leadership which is having an impact on standards. Capacity to improve is strong.
- The evaluation of teaching and learning against the Teachers' Standards is rigorous. Priorities are identified and effectively linked to school development planning, performance management and professional development for individuals
- The school uses its own staff and professional links within the federation and other local non-selective and selective schools for staff's professional development. Staff appreciate the range of options available. Teachers in need of support have personalised improvement programmes which involve successful middle leaders as critical friends.
- The tracking of students' performance is rigorous and their progress is monitored effectively. Senior and subject leaders meet regularly to review the achievement of groups and individual students against targets. Inspectors found that students' progress and understanding in books corresponded accurately to the progress tracking sheets. The school makes use of early entry for GCSE examinations wisely.
- Middle leaders are strong overall. They say that they are held accountable in meetings where pupils' progress and interventions are evaluated but that systems have 'dramatically improved' to enable them to do this. One middle leader said, 'We all feel very much more in control of our departments.'
- The curriculum is a developing strength of the school. It is kept constantly under review by senior leaders so that it provides the best opportunities for achievement, access to university and employment and enables students to study subjects they enjoy. The impact of the federation in developing the Years 7 and 8 REAL curriculum is shown in students' achievement and enthusiasm to learn.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively promoted through a range of events, performing arts and cultural links with other schools.
- The school's commitment to equal opportunity and tackling discrimination is shown by its curriculum offer and effective systems for monitoring progress so that all students achieve well.
- Students are given clear, unbiased guidance and careers information to prepare them for the next stage of their education and working life.
- The local authority has a good relationship with the school and has offered strong support when required.
- A very large majority of responses on Parent View agreed or strongly agreed that the school was well led and managed. Parents and carers are increasingly helping to steer the direction of the school through the Parent Forum.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is fully involved in the life of the school and the federation and demonstrates good challenge and support to the school, while acknowledging that there is still much to do. Governors are committed to making sure that all students are successful and prepared for life by increasing the range of opportunities in the curriculum for students to develop personal, academic, social and employability skills.
 - Governors have an accurate picture of the school's performance in relation to other schools' nationally and make sure they are kept regularly up to date on students' achievement and progress so that they can challenge actions and impact.
 - Governors have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching in the school and they are involved in determining staff's salary progression from the outcomes of performance management, and teachers' salary progression is declined if targets are not met.

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	118903
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426555

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
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	1,007
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	188
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Lesley Broom
Principal	Jon Barker (Executive Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	29 February–1 March 2012
Telephone number	01732 353544
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