

Hartsdown Academy

King George V Avenue, Margate, Kent, CT9 5RE

Inspection dates 20–21 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- As a result of good teaching, students' standards are broadly average at the end of Year 11. This represents good achievement from low starting points.
- Students learning English as an additional language make exceptionally good progress. Developed by the academy, the teaching programme called, 'My new school, my new life' is used as a model for other Kent schools.
- Teaching is good. The level of challenge for all students, including the most able, is high. Teachers plan their lessons so that students can learn well.
- The sixth form is good. In this area of high economic deprivation, in 2013, all sixth form leavers successfully entered employment, further training or higher education.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Students are courteous and polite to each other and adults around the school.
- The level of care for students and families is exceptional. Staff work diligently with the community and external agencies to ensure students do as well as possible.
- The different subject combinations are very well matched to the students' learning needs and aspirations. School leaders want the very best for the students and provide the means to achieve it.
- Senior leaders and governors have a clear vision and sense of moral purpose for the school and its students. They have created an inclusive community where students from different cultural backgrounds play, work and achieve together in harmony.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Students are not always clear about the strengths and weaknesses in their work if the feedback they receive from teachers is not detailed enough.
- Occasionally, a few students struggle to meet the school's expectations of behaviour and so they do not learn as well as they should and they disturb learning for other students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 lessons of which four were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition the inspection team made a number of shorter visits to lessons to evaluate the most-able students' achievement and the quality of the vocational provision and its impact on achievement. Visits were made to the unit for hearing impaired students and the Thanet Skills Studio.
- Meetings were held with school staff including middle and senior leaders, members of the attendance and behaviour support teams, and representatives of the governing body and the local authority.
- Three groups of students talked to inspectors about their views of the school and the inspection team spoke informally to students at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors took account of 25 responses to the online Parent View survey and 48 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including students' work, attainment and progress data, subject and school evaluation records, development plans, performance management information, minutes of governing body meetings and records of safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspection team observed the work of the school at break and lunchtime and visited an assembly and tutor time.

Inspection team

Janet Hallett, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Elson	Additional Inspector
Jackie Jones	Additional Inspector
Fatiha Maitland	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hartsdown Academy is a smaller than average-sized, non-selective school in a county where one in four students attends selective schools.
- The school has a unit for hearing impaired students which currently has six students on roll.
- The executive headteacher is also the executive headteacher of Cliftonville Primary School.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is twice the national average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and service family children, is well above the national average. There are a few looked after children and no children from service families currently in the school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is well above the national average; the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well above average.
- About 60 students are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding, which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The number of students joining and leaving the school after Year 7 is much higher than average. In the current Year 11, just under two thirds of students began their schooling at the academy in September 2009.
- The school runs the Thanet Skills Studio which provides vocational provision on a nearby site for students in Years 10 to 13. The school also provides places for students from other Thanet schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for student's attainment and progress.
- The school contributes to and benefits from strong professional links with Cliftonville Primary School, the Coastal Academies Trust and the East Kent Learning Alliance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the impact of teaching by consistently implementing the school's assessment policy for marking so that:
 - all teachers mark students' work to check their progress and give them clear guidance about precisely what they need to do to improve
 - students know that they are required to respond to teachers' written comments.
- Improve students' behaviour by making sure that:
 - all teachers apply the behaviour policy and demand consistently high standards of behaviour in lessons so that all students learn well and can achieve their best.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with extremely low prior attainment; by the end of Year 11, they achieve broadly in line with the national average. This is as a result of good teaching including carefully targeted extra help and support. Achievement is not yet outstanding because not all groups of students consistently make the progress they are capable of.
- All students achieve five A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics, in line with or above the national figure for their starting point.
- In English, attainment at A* to C is good and the proportion of students making the progress expected is close to the national figure. In mathematics progress has been slower but is now improving rapidly as a result of a new subject leader.
- Achievement in GCSE science is good. Attainment at GCSE is consistently in line with the national average for core, additional and separate sciences. This is supported by the learning inspectors saw in lessons.
- The prior attainment of students in the sixth form is significantly lower than the national picture. Some students who joined the school after Year 7 continue with GCSE courses into Year 12. Achievement is improving and is broadly good. Students' achievement on vocational courses is particularly high.
- The most-able students make good progress. Observations of the 'challenge pathway' (courses for the most able), analysis of students' progress and work in books confirm that work is demanding for all Key Stage 4 students.
- The achievement of pupils eligible for extra funding is improving and the gaps between the standards they reach and others are closing. In 2013, the gap in English was about half a GCSE grade and for mathematics it was just under one GCSE grade. These gaps are being narrowed further in 2014. This is as a result of improved attendance, reduced exclusions and good teaching.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including students attending the hearing impaired unit, make good progress, in common with their peers, in relation to their starting points. This is because their needs are identified quickly and accurately and they receive well-targeted support. This includes the school supporting parents and carers so that they can help their children at home.
- The school has extensive literacy programmes for all students including specific lessons and accelerated reading schemes. Students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding enjoy talking about the progress they have made and they are proud of their reading log.
- Effective analytical screening and phonics (the sound letters make) systems are in place to boost literacy skills. Year 11 students, while understanding that it was important for them to develop a wider vocabulary and range of writing styles, were able to reflect very movingly about how difficult it was for them to improve their use of standard English rather than always using social media language. They are proud of their achievements.
- The school makes limited use of early entry for GCSE examinations, which is being phased out.

The quality of teaching is good

- Students' good progress is the result of good teaching for whole classes and small groups, combined with very effective support for individuals. Relationships are strong and there is a positive atmosphere in lessons with students being keen to learn.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding because not all teachers follow the school's assessment policy to check students' progress in their written work consistently; students are not always given clear guidance about what they need to do to improve their work. When their work is marked

helpfully, students do not always respond to teachers' written comments.

- Students' interest is captured by the interesting lessons teachers plan. The stimulating resources used in lessons also help students to learn well. In a Year 9 English lesson, the teacher planned a demanding sequence of activities involving reading and evaluating an unseen poem; students developed confidence and high levels of competence in writing about the poem. In a Year 8 English lesson, students developed their understanding of the word 'empathy' and made strong progress because the teacher skilfully steered a discussion about the meaning of the word, which absorbed students fully.
- Teaching for the most-able students is demanding. In a Year 11 chemistry lesson students applied their understanding of relative atomic mass to making an exact quantity of a complex salt; they did this very well.
- Developing students' literacy skills is rightly a high priority for the school. Literacy lessons have been introduced by extending two of the school days. In several subjects inspectors observed many examples of teachers giving students time to develop and apply their skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. In a Year 7 literacy lesson a student successfully described an incident in the story without using the word 'like' because the teacher insisted on correct English and provided encouragement for her to do so.
- Students' literacy skills are also developed very well, through library sessions, the literacy festival and the school radio station.
- Teachers check students' progress in lessons well. Contributing to students' good learning, teachers pose questions in different ways and choose students to answer them as well as asking more open questions which promote discussion. Most students are keen to answer in full sentences and they use subject vocabulary very well.
- Teaching assistants and support teachers help students most effectively. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, students were given support to tackle some difficult questions on probability; the teamwork between the adults in the lesson enabled students to develop resilience and make progress.
- Parents and carers agree that their children are well taught.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Most students are keen to learn and there is a calm, respectful and friendly atmosphere. Break and lunchtimes are orderly and noise levels in the canteen are low; there is little litter. Behaviour is not yet outstanding because in a few lessons a small minority of students find it difficult to meet expectations and so learning is occasionally disturbed.
- Students have very good relationships with each other and with adults. The house and vertical tutor group system, combined with a variety of activities and opportunities for student leadership, helps students to develop self-awareness and a sense of community.
- Bullying is uncommon but students know what to do and can talk to their tutor and other staff. They are confident action will be taken. Older students described the restorative justice programme and how it helped them to listen and understand others. There is very little racist bullying because swift action is taken should it happen.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students feel safe in school, including knowing how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. They learn about this, and how homophobic bullying is unacceptable, from information in lessons and in assemblies.
- The school works very effectively with families and its community profile and actions greatly support students' personal, social and academic development.
- The school attendance team, family support workers and educational welfare officer work very effectively with families to improve students' attendance. As a result, attendance has improved year on year and is now broadly in line with the national average for all groups of students.
- Persistent absence is reducing rapidly and figures for Gypsy/Roma students are well below the

national average for these students. Students enjoy coming to school.

- The number of fixed-term exclusions is reducing but the school has recognised that it has to do more. A new unit is about to open on site as an addition to the behaviour support provision so that students can reflect on their behaviour and later reintegrate more successfully into school.

The leadership and management are good

- The leadership of the executive headteacher and senior team is good. They have a clear vision for the direction of the school and deliver sustainable improvements for students. All students, whether they come from the local community or are new arrivals from abroad, are welcomed into an inclusive and harmonious community designed to ensure that everyone can succeed. The school's capacity to improve is strong.
- The evaluation of teaching and learning is achieved through focus weeks with priorities identified and effectively linked to school development planning.
- Teaching and learning are well led. The school uses its own practitioners and links with a variety of professional and commercial organisations. Staff acknowledge the access they have to high-quality professional development.
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because school self-evaluation is not precise enough and so priorities to improve teaching do not have a sharp enough focus across the school.
- Teachers in need of support have personalised improvement programmes. However, if this is not successful, when required, leaders confidently take swift and robust action to secure improvements for students.
- Tracking of students' performance through the progress tracker is carefully planned and implemented. There are five assessment points in the year so that students' progress is monitored effectively. Senior and subject leaders are fully aware of the proportions of students on track to make good progress. They meet regularly to review groups' and individuals' achievement so that they can take action for those who are falling behind.
- Middle leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities, including their role in working effectively with parents and carers. They take responsibility for students' performance and use the data about it very effectively with their teams to plan extra support.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school being designed to meet all students' needs through four distinct 'pathways', which all give support for students' literacy development as well as academic and vocational courses.
- The transition school ensures that all Year 7 students are effectively supported to develop good learning habits. For older students, the Thanet Skills Studio is an innovative, industry standard provision, where students achieve outstandingly well.
- Support for students learning English as an additional language is very effectively led. This exemplary provision has grown and developed as the number of students has increased in recent years. It is a model for other schools in Kent.
- Students are given clear and unbiased guidance and careers information and feel well prepared for the next stage of their lives in education or employment.
- The school has developed strong professional partnerships and receives light touch support from the local authority.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively promoted through the curriculum and a range of visits and events.
- The school's commitment to equal opportunity and tackling discrimination is shown by its curriculum offer, commitment to early support when needed and effective systems for monitoring progress so that all students achieve well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body works very successfully with the senior team to shape the ethos of the school. Members are fully committed to this ethos and are fully involved in the life of the

school. Governors have strong links with faculties, visit often and act as reading buddies for students. They ensure that community links are fostered and strengthened.

- Governors have an accurate picture of the school's performance in relation to other schools nationally. They make sure that they are kept up to date regularly on students' progress so that they can challenge actions and impact.
- Governors understand the quality of teaching in the school and they are involved in determining staff's salary progression from the outcomes of their annual reviews; teachers' salary progression is declined if they have not met their targets.
- They have strategic overview of the pupil premium extra funding and keep its allocation and impact under review. The school is financially secure.

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	136571
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	441112

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	965
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dorothy Collins
Headteacher	Andrew Somers (executive headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 July 2011
Telephone number	01843 227957
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