

The Canterbury Academy

Knight Avenue, Canterbury CT2 8QA

Inspection dates	12–13 October 2015
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' overall achievement in 2014, including in English and mathematics, was much lower than that seen nationally. It did not improve last year. School information indicates that the decline has now been halted, but improvement in standards is not yet rapid enough to secure good progress for all pupils.
- Disadvantaged and more-able pupils make significantly less progress than other pupils nationally. Boys do less well than girls.
- Senior leaders do not use information on pupils' progress and achievement effectively over time to openly identify the decline in standards or make improvements. Their evaluation of standards in the school is overgenerous. As a result, pupils' progress and outcomes are not improving quickly enough.
- The quality of teaching is too variable across subjects, year groups and classes. Teachers' feedback to pupils is not always effective in helping them to improve quickly.
- Leaders do not set precise enough targets for improvement for teachers because the quality of teaching is not evaluated in sufficient detail. Consequently, training for teachers is not raising standards consistently.
- Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement because it is too variable in quality. This is reflected in the disappointing outcomes for students, particularly in academic subjects.
- Governors do not challenge senior leaders robustly. They do not measure the school's outcomes stringently against national outcomes.

The school has the following strengths

- The inclusive philosophy and ethos of the school and its commitment to giving all pupils a wide range of opportunities and a variety of subjects, including in the sixth form, are real strengths. Parents are very positive about the school's ethos.
- Provision in sport and in the performing arts is very good. Pupils relish the opportunities afforded by the really good facilities and the professional training on offer to them.
- Pupils in alternative and resourced provision are well served and their range of needs is met.
- Pupils usually behave well around the school and the atmosphere is positive and calm.
- Safeguarding is effective. The school works hard to support pupils that need additional help. Pupils feel safe in school and parents agree.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Senior leaders should set a clear direction for the school through a candid and accurate evaluation of information on outcomes, and use it robustly to:
 - ensure that all school improvement initiatives are planned, implemented and reviewed based on an accurate analysis of pupils' progress, and with the impact made on pupils' achievement as the key measure of success
 - embed a more open culture of identifying areas for improvement across the school so that they can be understood by all staff and tackled quickly
 - help governors improve their knowledge and understanding of progress information so that they can challenge leaders more effectively
 - ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress compared to national outcomes.

- Improve the impact that leaders have on the quality of teaching through:
 - analysing teaching more forensically, identifying precisely what needs to improve, then providing targeted professional development
 - setting precise targets for teachers which make sure that better teaching practice improves progress for all pupils
 - reducing variability of practice between subject areas and securing swift improvements to ensure good teaching in all departments
 - improving, consistently: the quality of teachers' feedback and its impact; the effectiveness of questioning to develop understanding and challenge for more-able pupils; and behaviour management and the planning of lessons to ensure that all pupils make good progress
 - making a closer link between pupils' progress and leaders' judgments about the quality of teaching.

- Improve the standard of teaching in the sixth form so that it is all as good as the best, and ensure that students make better progress in academic and vocational subjects.

- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved. An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Senior leaders, including governors, have not used information on pupils' progress and achievement well enough to identify declines in standards or to remedy them swiftly. They have not focused sufficiently sharply on comparing outcomes in the school with those achieved by pupils nationally or been frank with staff about how much progress pupils should be making. This has resulted in low rates of progress, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and the more able.
- Leadership of teaching, including in the sixth form, has not, over time, focused precisely on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. Support from the school improvement partner, a local authority school improvement partner, has resulted in more accurate judgments on teaching. Leaders now look more effectively at how teaching makes an impact on pupils' progress. Nevertheless, this has not yet had the desired effect in securing good teaching and progress across the school.
- Senior leaders' view of standards in the school has been overgenerous on outcomes and the quality of teaching. Leaders have not adopted a sufficiently self-critical approach. This inhibits sharp and effective planning for improvement.
- The culture and ethos of the school are fully inclusive and shared by the whole community. Staff and students are rightly proud of the way that the school caters for a wide range of pupils in terms of rich curriculum opportunities and diligent pastoral care.
- The four-year programme in partnership with the Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys has borne fruit in terms of pupils' raised expectations and self-esteem. However, this has yet to have an impact on the levels of progress made by more-able pupils compared to national benchmarks.
- Senior leaders, including governors, have not fully evaluated the impact of pupil premium spending on the outcomes of eligible pupils, or published this on the website as required. Disadvantaged pupils make significantly lower rates of progress than other pupils nationally. The gap is not closing quickly enough.
- Leaders' promotion of equal opportunities has variable impact. Positively, pupils reflect, and school records show, that there are few instances of discriminatory behaviour. Assemblies and mentor time are used to raise important issues such as migration and refugees. The code of conduct is largely adhered to by pupils. Nevertheless, the school does not secure good enough achievement for some groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.
- Newly appointed directors of teaching and learning are now in place and demonstrate determination and enthusiasm for their role. They have not yet had time to have an impact on raising standards. As yet, middle leaders do not all have a secure grasp of how to identify specific weaknesses in teaching, and how to address them through targeted training.
- Targets set for teachers through performance management do not set out precisely enough what teachers need to improve, how they should change their practice and how the impact on pupils' performance will be measured. Teachers are held to account for general improvement, but not very specific targets that will accelerate the progress of all pupils.
- Senior leaders place a strong emphasis on employability skills. The school's commitment to independent careers advice and education serves pupils well. All pupils have individual interviews as well as group presentations to support their subject choices in Year 8 and in the sixth form. In addition, the transition from primary school into Year 7 is well managed. Information about new pupils is assiduously gathered and used to set pupils in ability classes for some subjects, and support their needs. However, below-average outcomes for mathematics and English GCSE are a disadvantage for pupils' future prospects.
- The breadth and richness of the curriculum are strengths of the school in terms of the range of subjects offered. The Employability and Enterprise College that is part of the school caters very well for pupils on vocational programmes. It plays a significant part in engaging these pupils and keeping them in learning and in school, and enhances their future life chances. Individual pupils are well supported by the school.
- The school offers a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, which are enjoyed by pupils. Sport and drama are cited by pupils as particularly impressive. These opportunities have a positive impact on pupils' social development and welfare.
- Nevertheless, senior leaders do not evaluate the curriculum in terms of its impact overall on pupils' progress sharply enough. For example, the experience of disadvantaged pupils across the curriculum is not tracked with sufficient rigour to allow leaders to identify areas that are not working as well.

- There is some evidence of the school's promotion of British values in the PSHE programme and in mentoring time, as well as school events and assemblies. However, pupils, including sixth-formers, are less clear about what British values are. Some areas such as sport, art and performing arts make a strong contribution to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. This is not as fully developed as it might be in other subjects where opportunities are sometimes missed to overtly promote these values.
- Leaders monitor the alternative provision attended by pupils robustly. Pupils' attendance, behaviour and progress are checked frequently and thoroughly. As a result, pupils attend and behave well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the Board of Directors do not challenge the senior team rigorously enough to ensure that they have a clear grasp of how well pupils are achieving in school. They are not sufficiently involved in the strategic review of standards in the school to ensure that leaders produce a sharply focused improvement plan.
 - Members of the Board of Directors are aware of the quality of teaching, but are not clear enough about how to check the impact it makes on pupils' progress.
 - Members of the Board of Directors understand how the performance of staff leads to salary progression, but do not have a sharp enough knowledge of the quality of targets being set to help staff improve.
 - Members of the Board of Directors have not undertaken a thorough analysis of the impact of the pupil premium funding on the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
 - Members of the Board of Directors involve themselves well in the school and make regular visits, including during the whole-school reviews. They observe lessons and check that policies are being adhered to.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school places a high priority on ensuring that pupils are safe and well cared for and it does this well. The vast majority of parents are supportive of the school and feel that pupils are safe. Most pupils also report that they feel safe and happy in school. The school works with and refers concerns to other agencies very effectively.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time is not consistently good across all subjects or within some subject areas such as science and humanities. Although there is some excellent practice, for example in performing arts, pupils' progress in several areas, including humanities subjects, is not good enough. This is partly because teachers do not use prior assessment information well enough to meet the needs of and stretch and challenge all pupils.
- Teachers do not always identify or follow up issues of poor spelling and grammar and, as a result, some pupils' literacy remains too weak. Not enough challenge is offered to more-able pupils, which means that they are not making rapid enough progress, including in English.
- Some of the feedback given to pupils is clear and includes very helpful and specific targets which are having an impact on pupils' progress. However, feedback is not consistently useful. It is not always precise enough to help pupils identify how to improve.
- Boys do not always achieve as well as girls, for example in science. Scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection revealed a lack of work and untidy presentation in a significant minority of boys' books.
- Tasks are not consistently challenging for pupils across all subjects. When this is the case, pupils become distracted and the pace of learning slows.
- In a very few lessons, teachers do not manage students' behaviour in a way that ensures a productive environment in the classroom.
- The school has a policy in place to support the improvement of students' reading and writing skills. However, there is little evidence of this being implemented consistently across the school. As a result, some students' literacy remains weaker than it should be. Moreover, students do not have enough access to books in the school learning resource centre. They are not allowed to borrow books in case they lose them. In design and technology, however, inspectors saw very good examples of work to improve pupils' literacy, with teachers developing pupils' use of technical language well.
- Homework does not always challenge pupils, for example in science. A few more-able pupils commented that they had received little homework in this subject.

- Teaching in mathematics is variable in quality, but has improved over time, resulting in better progress from some groups of pupils. Mentors help pupils to develop their numerical skills during short weekly sessions at the start of the day.
- The teaching of performing arts is a strength of the school. The subject knowledge of teachers, and the level of challenge in the best lessons, are high and ensure that pupils make very good progress.
- In the best lessons students are highly engaged. Here, teachers use questioning extremely well, with a demonstrable impact on pupils' learning. Pupils make good progress because work is challenging and thoughtfully planned to develop their skills and understanding. For example, in an art lesson, students enjoyed creating two- and three-dimensional models out of wire, developing complex skills to do so.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is good.
- The school has proactive, bespoke packages of support for pupils who need it, which has a positive impact on their personal development and welfare. This inclusive approach is a core principle of the school.
- Leaders can demonstrate examples of work which has made a real difference to the attendance and engagement of individual pupils, including in the sixth form.
- The school has worked very hard to encourage better attendance, and persistent absenteeism is reducing rapidly as a result. However, it remains slightly higher than average.
- Attendance and behaviour in alternative provision are strong. This is because the curriculum provision is really good and helps keep pupils in school and learning.
- Students feel safe and say they are taught how to stay safe, for example, in terms of online safety.
- Personal development is augmented by a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and the high-quality resources provided by the school. Pupils say they thoroughly enjoy these additional activities.
- Performing arts and sport make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Generally, pupils behave well around the school site, are polite and courteous and look smart in their uniforms.
- In lessons, pupils are usually cooperative and attentive, and many are keen to learn. Where work is less interesting or challenging, occasionally pupils become distracted and chat amongst themselves, which slows their learning.
- Exclusions have reduced dramatically. The wide range of interesting courses and opportunities provided by the school means that pupils who have difficulty with their behaviour are better engaged in their work. In addition, the school provides good pastoral support and care for pupils and works extremely well with other organisations to ensure pupils' safety and welfare.
- Information provided by the school shows that incidents of poor behaviour are few and most pupils agreed with this. Older pupils say that bullying is rare and, if it happens, it is sorted out quickly.
- Some younger pupils are less positive about behaviour. Sometimes older pupils behave more boisterously between lessons and when they are not supervised. In a few lessons, younger pupils talk over the teacher and do not respond well to instructions.
- The vast majority of parents say they think behaviour is good.

Outcomes for pupils require improvement

- Exam results show pupils' progress from their starting points was, overall, much lower than national levels in 2014. More-able pupils did not make enough progress in English or mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils made significantly less progress than others nationally. Achievement information provided by the school revealed that examination results and progress in 2015 declined further, although attainment in English improved.

- Inspectors found that outcomes for current pupils are improving, but not as rapidly or strongly as they need to for pupils to make good progress.
- In lessons the progress made by pupils is good in some areas but varies between subjects and groups. In particular, overall, boys do not do as well as girls, more-able students' progress is not strong enough and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not make enough progress. Pupils with English as an additional language and looked after children do as well as or better than other pupils in the school. Current pupils are now making better progress in mathematics and English.
- Scrutiny of pupils' books reflects these findings. In addition, books show that Year 7 students have not all made a strong start with their work, and pupils' presentation is sometimes scruffy. This is because teachers' expectations are inconsistent.
- The school recognises that disadvantaged pupils do not make as much progress as others in school or nationally, and these gaps are not closing at an even rate across all subjects. Overall, figures provided by the school show that while some individual pupils are making much better progress, the pupil premium funding has not been spent in a way to ensure that disadvantaged pupils' progress accelerates as it needs to. Equally, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making slower progress than they should. New directors of learning have recently been appointed and will focus on making improvements in these areas.
- More-able pupils do not make enough progress in English, and their achievement remains lower than other pupils in this group nationally. They are now making better progress in mathematics. However, the degree of challenge offered to more-able pupils is inconsistent across subject areas. In addition, pupils do not make enough progress in humanities or languages. This is a legacy of staffing difficulties and some previously weaker teaching.
- Pupils in alternative provision, in the Employability and Enterprise College and in the school's own off-site provision benefit greatly from the school's strong, inclusive ethos. The key focus of work with these pupils is to support their personal development and welfare and this is having a really positive impact. Increasingly, pupils are benefiting from more discrete subject teaching when appropriate. Moreover, the sixth form offers several inclusive pathways to ensure that all students are supported to continue with their education.
- Some lower-ability pupils make exceptional progress in their reading. This is because of intensive reading programmes undertaken by the school to great effect.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Students now make better progress than previously on vocational courses and their achievement is broadly in line with average. However, achievement on academic programmes, and for those retaking mathematics and English GCSEs, is not good enough.
- Leaders' tracking of students' progress is not yet being translated into effective action to raise standards.
- Progress between different subjects is too variable, and disadvantaged students are over-represented in those not succeeding in English and mathematics retakes.
- Although there is some good teaching, too much does not systematically develop students' understanding to enable them to reach challenging targets. Teaching is more effective in vocational courses because students' learning is better structured over time by teachers. Conversely, it is less effective in academic courses because teachers are less adept at ensuring that students know how to make good progress across all the elements of their course.
- Teachers' feedback does not always have enough impact on helping students make better progress and enabling those who are behind to catch up.
- Students' punctuality to lessons is not consistently good. During the inspection, several examples were seen of lateness disrupting learning for other students.
- Students' attitudes to learning are largely positive. Sixth formers set a good example to the rest of the school. They are well looked after through individual guidance and support, and attendance is good.
- The sixth form is highly inclusive and welcomes a wide range of students onto its extensive range of courses. Because of this it has expanded rapidly. The curriculum is a strength in terms of breadth and students typically have the right prior attainment to start their courses. The school promotes the understanding of British values through tutors, but leaders recognise that there is scope to improve pupils' understanding by embedding more opportunities in the wider curriculum.

- Current leaders have a good understanding of patterns of achievement and are taking some effective actions. However, recent initiatives to improve teaching and remedy weaker progress in academic subjects are, as yet, having variable results. Leaders recognise the need to check the impact of their actions on students' outcomes more rigorously.
- Students receive good careers guidance and support, and it has improved in the last year. Trips and visits as well as seminars for those undecided on their future are all helping to raise the number of students moving on to higher education. Moreover, the school's good provision for sport and performing arts help students progress well in sport and drama. As a result, the great majority of students move on to appropriate education and work destinations.
- Vocational and work-based learning make a useful contribution to students' learning and experiences but the impact is not good enough to ensure that all students achieve well.
- Safeguarding procedures in the sixth form are secure and students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Students were keen to express the harmonious nature of the student group, citing the strong pastoral system as a key reason why students of all backgrounds are welcomed into the school.

School details

Unique reference number	136302
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10000982

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	Secondary modern (non-selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,647
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	581
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debbie Wells
Executive Principal	Philip Karnavas
Telephone number	01227 462971
Website	www.canterbury.kent.sch.uk/#!/canterbury-high-school-home/mainPage
Email address	enquiries@canterbury.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 April 2012

Information about this school

- The school has grown significantly since the last inspection and is now a larger-than-average mixed secondary modern. The sixth form has also grown significantly and is much larger than average.
- The multi-academy trust of which the school is a member now includes the previously federated primary school, high school and sixth form and enterprise college for vocational learning. There is a nursery on site run by City View Pre-school and Nursery.
- There is a specially resourced speech and language unit for around 30 pupils. Pupils attend from south and east Kent as well as from Canterbury High School.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs at the school is higher than average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than average.
- The majority of pupils join the school with prior attainment that is significantly lower than average. However, an increasing number join the school with prior attainment that is at or above average.
- The school is responsible for an area wide alternative curriculum provision. This includes Phoenix House (previously a pupil referral unit), the Riverside Youth Centre and Canterbury Youth Commission. These facilities are all off site, but are part of Canterbury Academy. Around 13 pupils from years 9–11 attend

this provision, which is also attended by up to 30 pupils from local schools. Off-site provision is also offered for sixth form students at the Kent Equine Centre.

- The school works in partnership with the Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys. Several staff from the Langton school currently teach sixth form lessons at Canterbury Academy to approximately 100 students. In addition, a senior vice principal from Langton Grammar is seconded to work at Canterbury Academy for this academic year to support the school's leadership.
- The school meets current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made visits to 54 lessons across all year groups, several of which were accompanied by senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with executive principals, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils of all ages, governors and the school's external improvement advisor. A meeting was also held with the Head of School of the Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys. In addition, inspectors talked to pupils during lessons, at breaks and lunchtimes. An inspector listened to some Year 8 pupils reading. An inspector met with members of the parents' forum.
- Inspectors reviewed pupils' behaviour in lessons, during break and lunchtime and around the school.
- An inspector held a discussion with the leader of Phoenix House and made a visit to the Riverside Youth Centre.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents provided by the school including leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, the school improvement plan, information about pupils' achievement and progress, and records of leaders' reviews of teaching standards and appraisal. Furthermore, inspectors scrutinised books of a selection of pupils from Years 7 and 10 with senior leaders.

Inspection team

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