

Brockhill Park Performing Arts College

Sandling Road, Saltwood, Hythe, Kent CT21 4HL

Inspection dates 17–18 May 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils make good progress during their time in school.
- The principal is highly ambitious for all the pupils. She leads dynamically 'from the front'. She sets clear expectations for staff and pupils alike.
- Other senior leaders carry out their roles diligently and effectively.
- The school's farm provides many opportunities for pupils to learn creatively about the natural world.
- The school's performing arts specialism contributes extremely well to all pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Aspects of this work are exemplary.
- Teaching in many parts of the school enables pupils to make strong progress from very low starting points.
- Pastoral care is strong across the school.
- Learners do particularly well on vocational 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Weaknesses in some subjects that led to underperformance historically have been addressed.
- Pupils are proud of their school and treat the environment with respect. The site is large, clean and free from litter.
- Fewer pupils are absent from school than previously. Most attend well because they like school and believe it is helping them make progress.
- The school has taken decisive action to reduce the number of pupils excluded for poor behaviour. Most behave very well and are polite and cooperative with each other and the staff.
- The governing body knows the school well. Governors have a good appreciation of what the school does well and what it still needs to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching in science is not yet of the same high quality as other subjects. Improvements in science are taking longer to raise pupils' performance.
- The most able pupils are not provided routinely with challenging work that stretches them or enables them to reach their full potential.
- Lower-attaining pupils who are not on the special educational needs and disability register do not always receive work that helps them catch up quickly.
- A few pupils are persistently absent despite the school's best efforts to help them to attend regularly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Share the strong practice that exists in many areas more widely so that:
 - the quality of teaching in science matches the rest of the school
 - pupils who are not on the SEN and disability register or lower-attaining pupils are provided with work that helps them catch up quickly.

- Ensure that outcomes for pupils continue to improve by:
 - rigorously comparing work in all subjects to standards in other secondary schools locally
 - providing even more challenging tasks and learning activities for the most able pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The principal sets very high expectations for the school. Her passion and commitment to the pupils is clear. She takes a keen personal interest in their well-being and insists that all do as well as they can.
- The vice-principal provides a calm and methodical approach to the day-to-day running of the school. He has developed effective systems for ensuring that the school runs smoothly. Senior leaders provide a strong model of teamwork. Their skills complement each other's admirably.
- Other senior leaders contribute strongly to specific aspects of the school's leadership. Four senior members of staff manage the 'academies'. These are four sections of the school which carefully look after pupils' academic and pastoral needs.
- The subject leaders for English and mathematics provide strong leadership in their areas too. Changes to the leadership of science have begun to have an effect, but not yet on outcomes. Leadership is strengthening in the humanities and modern foreign languages. There are notable strengths in the leadership of the performing arts, especially drama and dance. This area is a strength of the school and has been since the school was designated with specialist performing arts status.
- Leaders support fully all efforts to maintain this specialism. They ensure that the benefits of the status are felt by as many pupils as possible. The school stages over 70 productions of different sorts each year, from an open air performance of Brecht down on the farm to dance shows, for example where pupils present the outcomes of their GCSE studies.
- Leaders ensure that there are always sufficient resources for the two aspects of its work which set it apart from other high schools: the farm and the high-class performing arts centre.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has been appointed recently but has already demonstrated genuine commitment to raising further pupils' attainment in reading. This is essential as many pupils enter the school well below the levels in reading expected for their age.
- Leaders have changed the curriculum in the last two years. This has meant a move away from vocational subjects at GCSE level. More pupils are opting to study subjects that will enable them to meet the nationally agreed standards in humanities and modern foreign languages at the end of Year 11. A minority of pupils continue to study vocational subjects which are much better suited to their ability and their intended careers.
- Leaders ensure that all pupils from Year 8 have access to a careers advisor. Many receive an interview to help them make the correct option choices. This good practice is maintained throughout key stage 4 and on into the sixth form.
- The school makes an extremely positive contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development through its performing arts work. Pupils learn to act and dance together, which helps break down traditional gender roles and also creates a very inclusive atmosphere in the school. Pupils also benefit from the contribution to their moral development through activities related to the farm. For example, pupils learn in design and technology about the importance of using sustainable materials for building. One group were making nesting boxes to be placed in woodland near the farm buildings. Others learn about reproduction by observing live births during the lambing season. This is a rare opportunity for many town-dwelling children to learn about the production of food and respect and care for animals.
- Lessons in religious studies and citizenship reinforce important messages about right and wrong and morality. History lessons also support pupils' development of appropriate understanding of politics, democracy and the rule of law. Frequently, inspectors heard pupils stating opinions or engaged in meaningful discussion of important issues. This prepares them well for life in modern, diverse Britain.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits also help to broaden pupils' perspective. Pupils benefit from additional musical, performance or sporting activities as well as trips to places of historical significance such as the First World War trenches.
- Over time, leaders have built a climate in the school where adults respect pupils and vice versa. Leaders are rightly intolerant of any behaviour or action which disturbs this. They are proud of what has been achieved but are not complacent. Leaders seek to maintain the momentum of improvement to carry the school forward to the next stage of its development.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors know the school well. They know its many strengths but are candid, open and honest about those aspects that still need to improve. For example they know that more work is required to close the gap further between disadvantaged pupils and others as achievement rises overall.

- Governors review the school’s performance regularly, conduct their own visits to the school to check on its progress and commission external advisors to gather an independent perspective on how well it is doing.
- Governors maintain careful oversight of the budget. They support the headteacher in the appropriate allocation of pupil premium funding (additional money from the government for those eligible for free school meals). It is used well to support pupils who need to catch up with reading and to provide a free breakfast for those who might otherwise come to school hungry. This careful financial management is also seen in their oversight of performance management. Teachers are only rewarded with pay rises when their performance matches the agreed standard. The process is thorough, robust and transparent.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The very large, idyllic site is open to the public. Senior leaders make all reasonable endeavours to challenge strangers and to ask dog walkers to keep animals under control. Visitors are appropriately challenged for their identity. The checks the school makes on all adults working or volunteering at the school are rigorous. This breeds a sense of security and safety among the pupils, who state that they feel safe. Parents agree.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is particularly strong in the performing arts and other creative subjects. Pupils learn well when they engage in practical activities such as ‘getting their hands dirty on the farm’ or when they design and make products.
- Teaching is also strong in English and improving all the time in mathematics. The humanities subjects are increasingly strong now that the school has recruited subject specialists to provide better chances for pupils to meet the demands of more academic courses.
- Teachers plan well together. This reduces the amount of time overall that they have to prepare. It also means that they find the best ways of building pupils’ knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers focus well on developing pupils’ literacy and oracy (the ability to express oneself fluently and grammatically in speech) in lessons.
- Teachers use information and communication technology, for the most part, very well. Good visual aids are used in many lessons and help to structure pupils’ learning. Pupils’ learning is also supported effectively with key words and spellings on classroom walls or calculation reminders in evidence.
- Many teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils’ knowledge and understanding. Most have a wide range of techniques to stop the class, gather quick views from pupils about how well they are learning and then, if necessary, reset the task so that progress in the lesson can be sustained or even quickened.
- All teachers follow the school’s assessment policy closely and give effective feedback to pupils. Most respond well, improving the work or making corrections. Over time, teachers have become adept at matching this feedback to the targets pupils are trying to achieve. Pupils, therefore, understand broadly how well they are doing.
- Parents are less clear about how well their children are doing. Some find the reports confusing because there are three different systems depending on the age of the child. Parents also expressed a range of views about the effectiveness and appropriateness of homework. Some felt it supported their child’s learning. Others did not.
- The strong features of teaching found in many parts of the school were not found in such depth or breadth in science. Leaders are aware of the need to spread more of the better practice that already exists in the school into this area. The local authority is also aware that it needs to support the school’s efforts in training and other improvement activities. This is to ensure that the decline in standards in science over the last three years is not only halted but reversed.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good. Most pupils benefit from high-quality pastoral care which contributes well to their well-being.
- Pupils spoke with composure and assurance when asked questions by inspectors. They are quietly confident in all that they do.

- Standards of oracy are high at all levels, with pupils making full responses in appropriate spoken English when asked to comment in lessons. This contradicts published information about the level of their performance in the written English examinations at the end of Year 11. This suggests that they make weaker progress overall than other pupils nationally. Inspectors found many to be bright, articulate and able to explain clearly what they were doing or learning. Several gave very clear indications of their intentions for the next stage of their education, employment or training. They were also able to describe clearly the processes they have been through to make the correct choices.
- There are no pupils who left school in the last year who are not in education, employment or training.
- A substantial minority of pupils experience challenges in their personal lives. The school provides focused and expert support for all whose needs are known. For example, the school's own counsellor works compassionately with a large number of young carers. The school has fostered good links with other agencies involved in young peoples' lives and enables many to access such services.
- Pupils transfer admirably their respect for animals, learned on the farm, into respect for adults and their peers.
- The school's programme of tutoring, sometimes called 'advisory', provides opportunities for pupils to learn effectively how to stay safe online, in relationships and on the roads. Some pupils demonstrate through their work that they spend a lot of time out of school on computers. Such teaching is, therefore, focused and necessary.
- Effective teaching is also provided to pupils on all aspects of bullying. A few pupils and some parents commented that bullying does still exist in the school. The very large majority agreed, however, that when it occurs it is dealt with appropriately and usually in good time.
- Effective links and monitoring activities mean that pupils studying in alternative provision are equally well cared for, attend well and behave appropriately in these settings.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves very well around the campus. The site is vast but is well supervised at 'brunch' times. Pupils move purposefully between lessons. Lessons start promptly and latecomers are dealt with appropriately.
- Inspectors saw a few examples of pupils being distracted or not paying attention when teaching lacked pace, challenge or interest. The most able pupils sometimes displayed these behaviours when work was too easy. Inspectors saw very few examples of pupils disrupting each other's learning.
- All members of the community understand the simple rules for behaviour management. Some pupils break these rules. They are dealt with effectively. The school has introduced an internal exclusion room to which pupils are sent for a single period. During this time leaders decide on the next step or action and each pupil is moved on quickly.
- Leaders set up the internal exclusion room because too many pupils were being excluded from school for too long. Consequently, the numbers of pupils excluded for a fixed term has reduced in the last year. The numbers of pupils who are excluded more than once are also reducing and are now closer to national levels.
- Leaders have also acted decisively to reduce the numbers of pupils who are persistently absent from school. Levels of persistent absence are now much closer to national levels. Overall the attendance of pupils has risen so that the rate of attendance in the current year is in line with national patterns. Sometimes pupils are absent because they miss the one and only bus from their area that drops off at the school. The punctuality of some pupils is also affected by the late running of some buses.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils typically join the school with very low levels of prior attainment. Many leave primary school having not reached standards expected for their age. Consequently pupils have large gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. In the current Year 8, for example, over a third of pupils had a reading age equivalent to a child less than 10.
- The school assesses each pupil rigorously when they join. Teachers carefully plan learning that will enable them to catch up. This works well for those who have special educational needs and receive funded support. Over their time in school these pupils' performance is broadly in line with pupils with similar starting points.
- Not all pupils, however, are as able to catch up so quickly. There is a large group of pupils who do not

have special educational needs or disabilities and are a long way behind their classmates. Often they find the work too hard and are at risk of falling further behind.

- Standards for Year 11 in English were above average in 2013 and 2014 but dropped back in 2015 closer to the national average. Leaders provided strong evidence that this 'dip' has been reversed for the present Year 11, who are set to do very well. Strong progress in lessons, in coursework checked by other teachers from other schools, and work in the pupils' books support this forecast. This strong practice is also seen in all other year groups in English and means that progress is consistently good.
- Standards in mathematics have been consistently in line with the national average for the last three years. Leaders again provided firm evidence that the current Year 11 are set to exceed these results due to strong teaching and a range of additional learning activities. Progress in other year groups in this subject is good.
- Published results for subjects like science, the humanities and modern foreign languages show steadily declining performance. However, leaders have acted decisively to strengthen teaching and are able to show in the performance information available for current Year 11 pupils, that this trend has been halted and reversed.
- Progress in the performing arts subjects is extremely good and enables pupils to achieve good GCSE or BTEC results. Pupils also do well in vocational subjects such as health and social care, travel and tourism and business studies. They make a strong start to these subjects in Years 7 and 8.
- Leaders recognise that more pupils need to get both their English and mathematics qualifications so that the overall headline figure of five A* to C GCSEs, including these subjects, rises. Last year, less than a half did. This year well over half are on track to do so.
- Leaders have also recognised the need to retain an appropriate balance between high-performing vocational subjects, suitable for many of the pupils, with the more traditional subjects studied by those seeking to meet the EBacc standard. They are adjusting the curriculum accordingly over time.
- Disadvantaged pupils generally catch up faster in this school than their peers in other schools. They add more value to their learning over time. Their performance is still behind all other pupils nationally but the gap is narrowing.
- A tiny proportion of the most able pupils do not go on to make the progress of which they are capable, or indeed exceed the expected progress. Inspectors identified that it was these pupils who were least stretched in lessons. Leaders recognise that more focused work is needed with this group to ensure that future cohorts make rapid and sustained progress.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The sixth form supports effectively the high aspirations that leaders have for pupils and learners across the whole school, both academically and holistically. The new head of sixth form is working closely with other senior leaders to ensure continuity for learners. School leaders take advantage of external support to evaluate provision, and to plan effectively for ongoing changes to the curriculum.
- Typically only half of the pupils in Year 11 remain at the school to follow level 3 study courses, with others moving on to appropriate level 2 courses at local colleges. Impartial information and guidance helps learners to make appropriate choices about their post-16 learning, either at Brockhill or elsewhere. A small number of learners join the 16 to 19 study programmes from other schools, mainly to study performing arts or animal care courses. In addition, the school hosts exchange learners from overseas, who add cultural diversity to the sixth form intake while benefiting from the experience of living and learning in England.
- GCSE English and mathematics courses support those who are yet to achieve a level 2 qualification in these subjects. As a result, most Year 12 learners have now achieved an English qualification, with extra help in place for those who still need to pass this or their mathematics GCSE.
- The curriculum offers a wide range of level 3 qualifications, which are a mixture of academic and vocational courses. Some A-level courses in traditional subjects are only studied by a small number of learners, but are maintained as a way of raising aspirations for younger pupils. This is increasing the proportion of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to move on to higher education.
- Learners on vocational courses make increasingly good progress year on year. Outcomes for academic subjects are less strong, with progress in these subjects declining over the past three years. This is partly as a result of the increasing number of learners following subjects which are preferred by universities to gain access to a wider range of degree courses. However current forecasts, based on reliable and

accurate assessment information, predict that the percentage of learners achieving expected progress in these qualifications will increase this year, alongside the proportion of learners achieving the higher grades of A* to B.

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time is consistently good across the range of 16 to 19 study programmes. Teachers use detailed subject knowledge to plan lessons that stretch and challenge learners' thinking. Questioning is used effectively to deepen understanding. Learners demonstrate high levels of oracy in lessons, and constructive feedback supports them in developing similar rigour in their written responses. Consequently, learners generally make good progress.
- Learners recognise the challenges of adjusting to the demands of level 3 study, and value the benefits of staying on into the sixth form. They have confidence in their teachers and feel supported by them, both emotionally and practically. They describe how adults make time to listen to concerns that they have, for example about their learning or future career choices, then help them to take control of the situation and find a solution to their own problem. This helps learners to develop their independence over time.
- Learners' learning and progress benefits from the opportunity to work with teachers individually or in small groups outside of lesson time, or to receive constructive feedback from additional work they undertake to support their learning. The study centre helps learners to use their time effectively outside of lessons, by providing a purposeful environment for them to work in, and with adults and resources to support them as needed.
- Good-quality careers information and guidance supports learners in making informed decisions about their options after they finish in the sixth form.
- All learners have the opportunity to participate in work experience, either at the end of Year 12 or on an ongoing basis throughout their sixth-form study. Support staff liaise effectively with local businesses to personalise placements to meet individual needs, and local employers sometimes approach the school to request learners to go and work with them. From the end of Year 11, learners have access to careers fairs and impartial guidance to help them consider future choices. Visits to university open days, prompted by learner demand, help to raise aspirations and inform learners about higher education.
- Learners benefit from a range of extra-curricular opportunities that develop their leadership skills and prepare them for the world of work. The school council is led by the head boy and head girl, and the highly popular young farmers club is also run by sixth-form learners. Learners act as peer mentors for younger pupils, both through a formal programme, but also informally where individual pupils are seen to be likely to benefit from additional academic or emotional support.
- There are opportunities for learners to participate in wider activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, Arts Award and to act as sports leaders, which develops their leadership skills and experience of the world. There is a culture of older learners and younger pupils working together in partnership, which is evident through the work of Instep, the dance company in residence. On a recent history trip to Berlin, older learners used their language skills to help younger pupils communicate in German.
- Year 12 and 13 learners work together in mixed-age tutor groups and follow a personal, social, health and economic education programme designed to meet their range of needs. This prepares them adequately for life beyond the sixth form, covering topics such as money management, current affairs and stress management.

School details

Unique reference number	137458
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10002939

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
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	1305
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Landers
Principal	Sonette Schwartz
Telephone number	01303 265521
Website	www.brockhill.kent.sch.uk
Email address	office@brockhill.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 January 2012

Information about this school

- Brockhill Park Performing Arts College is a larger than average-sized secondary school situated in a rural area on the outskirts of Hythe. The large majority of pupils travel to school by bus.
- There are slightly more girls than boys at the school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is just below the national average.
- The vast majority pupils are from White British households and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is close to the national average.
- The school benefits from a population that is generally stable. It is growing in size because pupils are gradually joining in the school from another locally that is closing.
- The local community experiences average levels of deprivation.
- The principal works closely with the Ashford Teaching Alliance, having led its foundation. The school works in a close collaboration with two schools in Ashford as well as the 'Hythe Hub' of local schools. The principal provides active support through coaching to other school leaders.
- The school provides part-time alternative provision for some of its pupils with the Towers School in Ashford, The Keith Graham Academy and the Birchwood Pupil Referral Unit.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection began as a short inspection of a good school under section 8 of the Education Act, 2005. On the first day of the inspection, it was deemed necessary to convert the inspection to a full section 5 inspection under the same Education Act, 2005. The lead and team inspector were joined by an additional five inspectors for the second day of the inspection.
- Inspectors observed learning in 50 parts of lessons and during two extended learning walks. Senior leaders jointly observed learning on 15 separate occasions. Inspectors visited teaching in all parts of the school and all aspects of the curriculum.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders regularly. They also met with subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, those responsible for the school's safeguarding arrangements and leaders of the 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Inspectors took into account 81 responses to a new confidential online questionnaire of staff.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body who are also the trustees of the school. The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector also met with a group of six parents and took into account 71 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's confidential online questionnaire.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils and the school council. The lead inspector heard seven Year 8 pupils read.

Inspection team

Dr Simon Hughes, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kathryn Moles	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dr Frederick Valletta	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Lee	Ofsted Inspector
Patricia Slonecki	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Brown	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Roessler	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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