

Erith School

Avenue Road, Erith, Kent DA8 3BN

Inspection dates

29–30 June 2016
30 September 2016

Overall effectiveness

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

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Good

Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The headteacher and school leaders have taken action to improve teaching but these initiatives have not had time to have consistent impact.
- Learning activities are not planned sufficiently well to ensure that pupils from different starting points are able to complete work successfully.
- Teachers do not ask pupils challenging enough questions to check their understanding and deepen their learning.
- Feedback to pupils about their work is not sharply focused enough. Consequently, pupils are unclear about what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils' progress is uneven across different year groups and subjects. Pupils do not make enough progress in mathematics and science, particularly in Years 9, 10 and 11. The rate of improvement has been too slow. Some groups of pupils still make less progress in these subjects than pupils nationally.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning vary depending on the teacher and are not consistently good. Some pupils are not prepared sufficiently for their lessons. Expectations around the work pupils produce are inconsistent.
- Leaders do not ensure that the promotion of tolerance and respect towards pupils from different groups and cultures is effective. They do not ensure that staff consistently challenge pupils' misconceptions and stereotypes.
- Good behaviour, both in and out of school, is not promoted well enough. Pupils do not receive enough information about how to keep themselves safe outside school. Leaders therefore do not fully prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

The school has the following strengths

- The school has established a well-understood set of guiding principles for behaviour called 'The Erith Way'.
- Pupils have opportunities to improve their school. Pupils in the student voice group know that senior leaders will listen to them and make changes.
- Pupils make good progress in English as a result of consistently strong teaching.
- The effectiveness of the 16 to 19 study programmes is good.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are good in all lessons, around school and beyond, by:
 - ensuring that staff apply the behaviour policy consistently so that pupils perceive the system to be fair
 - requiring pupils to arrive to lessons well prepared and ready to produce high-quality work
 - raising expectations of how pupils behave in school and beyond.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are fully prepared for life in modern Britain by:
 - planning a strategic approach to promoting respect, tolerance and understanding of different cultures in order to create harmony within the school and the local community
 - training staff to understand the potential risks faced by pupils in their communities and provide appropriate advice and guidance, so that pupils can keep themselves safe
 - giving staff the confidence to challenge stereotypes and discuss openly pupils' perceptions of each other and the wider world
 - insisting that staff have consistently high expectations about pupils' conduct around the school site and in the wider community
- Improve pupil outcomes by ensuring that:
 - all groups of pupils make at least good progress in all subjects, including mathematics and science, and across year groups
 - all leaders analyse information about pupils' progress consistently and act on it to ensure that all groups of pupils make at least consistently good progress
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan learning activities which meet the different needs of pupils from different starting points to enable them to do the work set for them
 - teachers use questioning more systematically to check pupils' understanding
 - teachers ask more probing questions to challenge pupils and deepen their learning
 - all teachers give pupils feedback about their work, according to the school policy, so that pupils know what they need to do to improve
 - all leaders continue to focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment and reduce inconsistency in the classroom.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- School leaders have not ensured that teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for pupils are good. While there have been some improvements in teaching over time, this is still too variable across subjects and year groups. Expectations in some areas are still too low.
- School leaders have not established a culture of respect, harmony and understanding between different groups of pupils. Consequently, they are not preparing them well for life in modern Britain. While the shared values of 'The Erith Way' (Excellence, Respect, Integrity, Teamwork and Honesty) have begun to address this, more needs to be done so that staff and pupils understand and respect cultural differences.
- Staff expectations around pupils' behaviour both in school and in the wider community are too low. Leaders have not ensured that staff consistently support pupils to behave appropriately in a range of different situations.
- The school sometimes struggles to appoint suitable teaching staff, particularly in science. School leaders have taken action to support agency staff and a range of interventions are put in place to strengthen pupils' learning.
- The headteacher and her senior team promote leadership and quality teaching through the school's performance management system. The process is detailed and thorough. It is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- School leaders organise a wide range of professional training for teachers. This helps teachers work together to share good practice and to learn from teachers and leaders in other schools.
- Middle leaders are competent, articulate professionals who are fully focused on school priorities. The monitoring, evaluation and review of teaching are rigorous and lead to the sharing of good practice. However, the impact of this improving practice is not yet consistent across the school. Heads of year monitor attendance, safeguarding and behaviour issues closely, and all middle leaders have a focus on driving and celebrating pupils' progress.
- Newly qualified teachers are well supported by leaders and colleagues and well prepared for their second year of teaching. The school's professional support programme has encouraged them to take responsibility and contribute to developments in their subject.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is tracked meticulously. The assessment system in Years 7 and 8 is fully embedded and working well. Pupils' learning in classes and their work in books shows that the progress of pupils in Years 7 and 8 is improving strongly.
- The pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. The attendance, behaviour and progress of these pupils are improving, particularly in Years 7 and 8. In these year groups, these pupils' work indicates that they are doing as well as others.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted. A wide range of visits and activities enrich pupils' experiences. Pupils contribute to community events and raise money for a variety of charitable causes.

- The curriculum is well designed and has a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress. A transition programme ensures that lower attainers and pupils who may find the change from Year 6 to Year 7 difficult are well supported. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow a range of academic and vocational pathways, which are well suited to their interests and aspirations. Pupils participate in a broad range of extra-curricular activities which support their personal development and learning.

Governance

- Governors have a clear vision for the direction of the school. They are acutely aware of the school's important role in the local community and they are totally committed to doing their best for the pupils. They meet with subject leaders, visit classes and talk to pupils regularly, and they know the school well.
- A large committee structure helps the governance of this very large school to be effective. Through the committees, governors monitor information on pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour. The scrutiny committee holds senior and middle leaders effectively to account for pupils' performance. As a result, outcomes for students in the sixth form have improved.
- Governors monitor the pupil premium expenditure effectively and commissioned an independent review of pupil premium spending. Governors make sure that impact on provision and outcomes is the focus of any decision-making about expenditure. As a result, progress and attainment gaps for this group of pupils are closing.
- Governors have undergone safeguarding training including training to prevent radicalisation and extremism in young people. The governor responsible for safeguarding is also appropriately trained.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors ensure that staff training in child protection is up to date and that record-keeping is accurate and detailed. Governors have played a key role in supporting school leaders to develop a positive culture of safeguarding throughout the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because there are too many inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. This leads to unevenness in pupils' attitudes, learning and progress in different subjects and across the year groups.
- Learning activities are not planned well enough to ensure that pupils, whatever their starting point, can complete the work successfully. Teachers set a high level of challenge in learning activities but pupils cannot always make the leap in learning. Pupils need more support to deepen their understanding of higher-level work.
- Teachers do not ask enough challenging, probing questions to check pupils' understanding and deepen their learning.
- Pupils do not always know precisely what they need to do to improve their work. Sometimes they are unsure because the feedback from teachers is too general. Pupils are clear that improved feedback on their work would help them learn better.
- The most able pupils receive more detailed and subject-specific feedback on their work. As a result, the most able pupils are making more consistent progress, particularly in English.

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving in some year groups and subjects but remains inconsistent. This is because of the variability in teaching overall.
- Building on the 'teamwork' value in The Erith Way, teachers encourage pupils to participate and engage collaboratively in activities. Pupils attempt tasks enthusiastically and enjoy their learning.
- The way school leaders monitor how well pupils are learning in Years 7 and 8 is successful. This has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning and on their progress. Pupils understand the system and can see clearly how well they are doing. They are well motivated to succeed.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge and they explain ideas clearly to pupils. Teachers model subject-specific vocabulary well and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning over time.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Leaders attempt to promote the British values of respect and tolerance towards different cultures and faiths through The Erith Way. However, staff do not routinely challenge stereotypes or pupils' perceptions of each other. Consequently, attempts to promote harmony among different groups of pupils are not always successful. Some pupils are not able to see the links between what they learn in school about fundamental British values and how they behave outside school.
- Pupils have had information about how to keep themselves safe on the internet, social media sites and on their mobile phones. However, their knowledge and understanding of different types of extremism are variable.
- Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to their school community. The student voice group has written its own action plan and meets regularly. They have brought about a number of improvements to the school such as planting trees and developing an outdoor eating area. The group is proud of their achievements and confident they will be listened to by school leaders.
- Pupils are encouraged to be aspirational, to aim for excellence themselves and take pride in each other's achievements. In a Year 10 assembly, pupils celebrated the progress of individuals from a wide range of starting points. Pupils talked animatedly to the inspectors about the reward system and how it motivates and supports them to do their best.
- Pupils say they are safe in school. They are confident in the adults to help them whenever they need support. There is occasionally some bullying but pupils say it is dealt with swiftly.
- Pupils attending alternative provision to study vocational courses are well supported by school leaders, and staff have developed effective links with teachers at the college. Pupils develop improved confidence and self-esteem through these courses, which has a positive impact on their learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils understand the behaviour policy, its sanctions and rewards and are clear that behaviour has improved over time. However, the conduct of pupils around the school site is still too variable. Often, pupils need considerable reminders from staff to behave appropriately and with respect for those around them.
- There is variation in pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons. Some lessons are disturbed by poor behaviour and some teachers do not have high enough expectations. Some pupils arrive ill-prepared for their lessons and do not produce work of a high enough quality.
- Pupils are generally smart and the majority wear their uniform in line with the school's code of conduct. However, infringements such as wearing jewellery, hair adornments and make-up, are not picked up systematically.
- Pupils respect and appreciate the quality of the learning environment, particularly the range of resources and art work displayed on classroom and corridor walls.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is now broadly in line with the national average. The school monitors attendance very effectively and has strong systems in place to ensure that pupils and their families are well supported to make sure they attend regularly.
- Pupils' attendance at the alternative provision is in line with the main school, and this is effectively tracked and monitored by school leaders.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen significantly and there is a strong trend of improvement, although the figures are still just above the national average. This is as a result of an impressive range of interventions, including strong individual support for pupils from learning mentors and the behaviour improvement programme.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved as a result of carefully focused support. The number of fixed-term exclusions has also fallen for this group of pupils. These improvements are now having a positive impact on the personal and academic outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Require improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because pupils' progress is uneven across subjects and year groups and for different groups of pupils. Pupils' work shows that the rate of improvement is sometimes not fast enough because of inconsistencies in teaching.
- In mathematics, outcomes for pupils are still too uneven. In Year 11, assessment information shows that the proportion of pupils making expected progress remains below the national figure. In lower year groups, pupils say teaching in mathematics is improving. They describe how the work is challenging but broken down for them so they can succeed. This is supported by work in pupils' books.
- In English, pupils are making more rapid progress as a result of good teaching. The proportions making expected and more than expected progress are above national figures.

- In Years 7 and 8, the rates of progress in almost all subjects are better than in older year groups because of improvements in teaching and assessment. The way that teachers monitor learning is fit for purpose and fully understood by pupils. It is well matched to the curriculum and pupils find it motivating. They enthusiastically monitor their own progress in their exercise books.
- In Years 9 and 10, leaders' use of the assessment system makes it more difficult for pupils to see how well they are doing and this has limited their progress. School leaders have already recognised this and are in the process of making changes.
- In 2015, disadvantaged pupils made much less progress than other pupils nationally. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is now improving, particularly in English and across subjects in Years 7 and 8, where disadvantaged pupils do as well as their peers.
- The most able pupils are now making better progress in English and mathematics. Pupils describe how they are set challenging targets across a range of subjects and feel well supported in their learning to achieve these. Pupils' work shows improving outcomes for the most able pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make as much progress as other pupils in Years 7 and 8 but there have been improvements as a result of the transition programme. In Year 11, this group of pupils have made more rapid progress this year because of carefully targeted intervention.
- The curriculum information advice and guidance programme is successful in ensuring that all pupils are in education, employment or training when they leave Erith Secondary School. The programme is well planned from Year 7 upwards in subjects and through a range of events. The school hosts an annual careers fair and all pupils are fully supported through careers sessions.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- School leaders have developed a strong and effective vision for the sixth form, which ensures that students are successful, enjoy and value their learning opportunities, and develop into responsible, caring, well-rounded individuals.
- The school offers a range of academic and vocational courses, and designs bespoke study programmes for all students which are flexible enough to meet their needs. The sixth form partnership supports a broad range of courses for students to access at other partnership schools.
- Students are very well supported and receive good, impartial advice and guidance on course choices. The induction process ensures that students have a good start to study in the sixth form and any course changes can be swiftly managed.
- Work experience is available for all students and although not all currently take this opportunity, it is a growing area for students on all courses.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form are improving strongly. Students receive good feedback on their work, and know their target grades and what they have to do to improve. Intervention support is always available and personalised for them as individuals.
- Sixth form leaders and subject leaders have developed strong links with parents. If there are concerns and a student falls behind, parents are invited into school and targets for improvement agreed. Students value the strong parental and family links.

- Students' personal development and welfare are good. They are positive role models for younger pupils. They present very well in business dress. There are a wide range of enrichment opportunities available including through the sports academy.
- Students' attendance in the sixth form has improved. Sixth form leaders recognise that attendance is a high priority and it continues to be an important focus for their work with students and families.
- Leaders have identified where not enough students complete courses and have taken action to change this. If courses do not match the interests and aspirations of the students, these are removed and new courses introduced. Students' induction into the sixth form is a strength and improvements in teaching also help students complete their studies and do well.
- In vocational courses students develop good study skills and make strong progress. Students benefit from teachers' good subject knowledge and their attainment is good.
- The school has rightly focused its energy on improving outcomes for students on academic courses. Students' work and assessment information indicate that students are now making better progress from different starting points and attainment is rising.
- The proportion of students successfully achieving a grade C in GCSE English and mathematics, as part of their sixth form studies, has improved. This is as a result of strong leadership in identifying this as a priority for students and taking effective action.
- Students receive good impartial careers advice. They are well counselled on their destinations when enrolling on the study programmes. Students say that they get good support for university applications.

School details

Unique reference number	136330
Local authority	London Borough of Bexley
Inspection number	10011895
This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.	
Type of school	Secondary modern
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	1,777
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	266
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Nuckley and Peter Carter (joint chairs)
Headteacher	Stephanie Allen
Telephone number	01322 348 231
Website	www.erith.kent.sch.uk
Email address	info@erith.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 March 2014

Information about this school

- Erith School is much larger than most secondary schools.
- It admits pupils across the full range of abilities and is designated as a non-selective school in an area with many grammar schools.
- Over a third of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding, which is above the national average.
- About one in four pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and receive additional support. This is well above the national average. However, the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an educational, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The school makes use of alternative provision to broaden its vocational curriculum. Some pupils study construction, hair and beauty, and motor vehicle courses at Bexley College.
- The school uses alternative provision for a few pupils to support their behaviour. This centre is New Horizons Federation in Erith.

- The school sixth form works in partnership with Welling School and Trinity School.
- The school met the government floor standards in 2015.
- The school meets the requirements for the publication of information on its website.
- The school was last inspected in March 2014, when it was judged to require improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The school was initially inspected on 29–30 June 2016. On 30 September 2016, two of Her Majesty’s Inspectors returned to gather further evidence around behaviour and safeguarding. The evidence gathered from all three days was used to inform the final judgements.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ learning in parts of many lessons and made a number of shorter visits to lessons. Many lessons were observed jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors looked at pupils’ work in a range of subjects and across year groups.
- Inspectors also visited form registration time, an assembly and sixth form induction day.
- A range of meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, leaders of subjects and year groups, governors, newly qualified teachers and staff working to support pupils’ attendance and behaviour.
- Five groups of pupils met with inspectors to give their views of the school. Inspectors also talked informally with pupils around the school and considered the responses to the school’s own student voice survey.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation including the school’s self-evaluation, policies and information about pupils’ progress, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered safeguarding policies and procedures and spoke to the designated officer for safeguarding.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 38 responses to Ofsted’s online parent questionnaire, Parent View, and also considered other communications from parents.
- Inspectors took account of the 111 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

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