

# The Robert Napier School

Third Avenue, Gillingham, Kent ME7 2LX

## Inspection dates

15–16 September 2016

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Some pupils do not make sufficient progress in mathematics. Standards are not rising quickly enough.
- Some disadvantaged pupils and some who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make rapid enough progress from their starting points.
- The sixth form requires improvement because AS- and A-level results are not yet good in some subjects. Overall, A-level results in 2016 did not improve from the previous year and AS-level results declined slightly in a small number of subjects.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school. Sometimes work lacks sufficient challenge, particularly for the most able.
- Some teachers are not using assessment information well enough to check that disadvantaged, most-able and most-able disadvantaged pupils are making fast enough progress.
- Attendance is below average and is not rising quickly enough. Too many disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not attending school regularly enough to secure good progress.
- Leaders and governors have not been systematic enough in checking the impact of spending on disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's resolute leadership has already brought about a number of substantial changes and has laid a firm foundation for continuing improvements.
- Pupils' progress in English is strong and sustained because teaching in this subject is effective.
- School leaders have taken the right steps to improve teaching. As a result, attainment in the majority of subjects improved in 2016.
- Pupils now behave much better than in the past and the positive climate for learning is helping them to make more rapid progress.
- The school is a safe and caring environment and pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Governors are becoming more confident in their ability to challenge school leaders.
- Middle leaders are increasingly effective because they hold their teams to account.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise achievement, by:
  - accelerating progress in mathematics
  - ensuring that all teachers set challenging work for all pupils that is matched to their ability, especially for the most able
  - ensuring that all teachers use assessment information to plan activities which increase the pace of pupils' progress, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - ensuring that courses are better matched to students' abilities in the sixth form so that more students attain high A level and AS course grades.
- Improve leadership and management, by:
  - ensuring that school leaders rigorously monitor the impact of spending of pupil premium money and special educational needs and/or disabilities funding and that governors hold leaders more stringently to account
  - continuing to ensure that more pupils attend school regularly, especially the disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - continuing to reduce the numbers of pupils excluded from school for poor behaviour, while maintaining high standards.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should also be undertaken to assess the effectiveness with which this additional funding is used.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leadership of teaching and learning is gathering pace but still requires improvement. Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly but they have not ensured that teaching leads to sustained progress for all groups of pupils.
- Leaders have not yet secured enough improvement in disadvantaged pupils' progress. In the classroom, teachers are not focusing enough on making sure that this group makes rapid progress.
- The school spends pupil premium funds on a number of interventions to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils. However, leaders have not been meticulous or regular enough in checking the effect of this spending and ensuring that it leads to pupils making swift progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not making the same progress as their peers. Leaders do not have a robust system in place for evaluating spending or tracking how well pupils are doing from their starting points and therefore they cannot identify or intervene when progress is slow.
- However, pupils in the visually impaired unit make better progress from their starting points because of the individual help they receive in class from adults who support them well.
- Pupils in Year 7 who enter the school with low literacy and numeracy levels are successful in improving their skills in these areas. This is because the school is effective in using the money it receives for the Year 7 catch-up premium to give them the extra help they need.
- Attendance rates in the school are improving but are still some way off national levels. Attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is too low. The school has worked hard on this aspect, particularly in the face of difficult historical issues, and a new attendance officer is now developing strategies to get more pupils into school.
- The headteacher has raised the morale of staff and pupils and the school is now a much more purposeful place. As a result, the school is improving at a faster pace. The headteacher has a very strong sense of moral purpose and has acted swiftly and decisively to instil some much-needed direction. He knows exactly where the school needs to improve. This is having a positive effect on pupils' learning and progress.
- Staff and governors are united in their support of the headteacher. They are enthusiastic about the positive changes to the culture of the school. One teacher said, 'This is a completely different school to when I joined 18 months ago.'
- Relationships in the school are positive and there is a tangible sense of warmth, friendliness and team spirit. This is helping to move the school forward.
- The executive headteacher is a regular visitor to the school and provides valuable support, challenge and guidance to the headteacher. The trustees from Fort Pitt and Thomas Aveling schools monitor progress across all the schools in the trust.
- The schools in the trust share their expertise with each other. For example, Thomas Aveling's mathematics department has supported Robert Napier's, which is helping to improve progress. Collaboration between the schools is strong, which is having a

positive impact on improvement.

- Middle leaders are increasingly confident about their roles. In particular, they value the weekly meeting time to work collaboratively within and across teams. Middle leaders said that they now feel better prepared to hold teachers to account and that Robert Napier 'is an exciting place to be a part of'. As a result, teaching is improving and pupils are making better progress, but there is more to do to iron out inconsistencies.
- Professional development for teachers has a high priority in the school. Staff meet regularly for training, 'buddy reviews' and specialist workshops. This is paying dividends because teachers are becoming more skilled in the classroom.
- Last year, a number of teachers left the school. The school struggled to recruit high-quality replacements mid-year and a large number of supply teachers were employed temporarily instead. As a result of this instability, the quality of teaching and learning dipped in some areas.
- To tackle the ongoing issue of recruitment in Medway local authority, the trust has acted collaboratively and now trains its own teachers in-house. This is having a positive effect because leaders are able to recruit new staff who are well known to the school. This has led to stable staffing in key areas of the school.
- The headteacher has put an effective system of performance management in place and governors keep a close eye on this process. Leaders set rigorous targets and teachers do not progress up the pay scale unless these targets are all met.
- School leaders have made several changes to the curriculum over the past year. For example, they have introduced more vocational courses in sport, art and technology which better match the needs of some low- and middle-ability pupils. As a result, pupils are more engaged and therefore making better progress.
- However, the curriculum does not yet effectively meet the needs of the most able pupils. For example, numbers opting for modern foreign languages in the current Year 10 were so low that this course did not run. The same is true of triple science in Year 9. The newly appointed gifted and talented coordinator has plans in place to address this, but it is too early to see what impact this is having on raising the aspirations of the most able.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. There is a wide variety of enrichment activities and clubs which are popular with pupils. For example, the history club enables pupils to experience such events as the medieval witch trials or Jack the Ripper's London. Clubs promoting artistic and sporting endeavours are also well attended. Trips abroad to New York and Ypres are helping to broaden pupils' horizons and understanding of the world around them.
- The school promotes fundamental British values such as tolerance, respect, democracy and the rule of law through pupils' weekly citizenship and personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils told inspectors how much they valued the opportunities they have to discuss topics such as 'Brexit', alcohol and drug abuse within these classes. Such opportunities prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain and also help them to understand how to keep themselves safe.

### **Governance of the school**

- The chair of the local governing body is also a trustee of the Fort Pitt and Thomas Aveling Academy Trust. He has been chair of the governing body for a year and has brought more focused leadership to the group.

- Governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are very supportive of the headteacher and share his vision for the school moving forward.
- Since the last inspection, governance has undergone significant change. New governors have been recruited with a balance of skills from within education and the commercial world. There is a greater sense of teamwork and governors said they now feel more confident to express their views.
- Governors know what teaching is like and fully support the headteacher in tackling underperformance decisively. They have supported the headteacher's actions first on clamping down on poor pupil behaviour and then through the high number of permanent exclusions that have resulted from this.
- Governors understand that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is not good enough. They have challenged this in meetings. However, they have not been sufficiently rigorous in challenging the impact of the use of the pupil premium on pupils' progress and holding leaders to account for this.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Statutory requirements are met. All staff have completed 'Prevent' duty training. Senior leaders and members of the pastoral support team are all trained in safeguarding procedures and a member of the governing body monitors their work regularly. Staff are clear about who to go to with concerns. Vulnerable pupils are referred swiftly and there are strong relationships with outside agencies so pupils quickly get the support they need.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement because there is too much variation within and across subjects. This affects pupils' progress.
- Currently, teaching does not consistently provide work that is matched to the range of attainment of pupils in the class. For example, even within classes that are set by ability, the same work is frequently given to every pupil. Consequently, some pupils fly through the work while others struggle to begin. This means that not all pupils are making the progress they should.
- In particular, in some subjects teaching is not meeting the needs of the most able pupils because it is not challenging enough. During the inspection, pupils told inspectors that they often found the work too easy or were covering things they had done in primary school. Where this happens, pupils become bored and lose focus. They do not disrupt lessons but they tend to drift off and become very passive. This has a negative effect on their rates of progress.
- The same is true of disadvantaged and most-able disadvantaged pupils. Teachers are not routinely identifying these pupils as key groups whose progress needs to be accelerated. As a result, they are not setting work that stretches and challenges these pupils, and do not raise pupils' expectations of what they can do and achieve.
- Pupils enter the school with below average attainment and often with weak literacy skills. English lessons do much to address these deficiencies but not all teachers are developing pupils' literacy skills sufficiently in other subjects. In addition, the school's marking policy is implemented inconsistently in literacy. This is slowing progress down.

- Teachers encourage pupils to read frequently and often, especially in key stage 3. Inspectors heard pupils of different abilities read and found they could do so with fluency and understanding. This is helping pupils to develop a love of reading and promotes their communication skills well.
- Teaching across the school is steadily improving and school leaders have invested heavily in developing teachers' professional skills. Where teaching is stronger, for example in history and physical education, teachers plan well and set work that challenges and stretches individuals. Lessons move at a swift pace and there are high expectations of pupils. Teachers skilfully question pupils to check their understanding and in particular, they probe ideas in greater depth.
- Relationships in lessons are positive and respectful and provide a firm bedrock for pupils to develop their learning. Pupils enjoy discussing and explaining their work together, which promotes swifter progress.
- Teachers give pupils helpful feedback as to how they can improve their work. This deepens their understanding of a particular idea. However, this good practice is not yet sufficiently embedded across the school in all subjects.
- School leaders give parents frequent information about how well their child is doing in each subject. Written information is sent home twice a year and there are regular parents' meetings with teachers. In addition, the school invites parents to special focus events such as the Year 11 'raising aspirations' evening which helps parents understand how to support their child to aim high.
- Teaching assistants support pupils with their work and their input is often very effective. They are patient in explaining the work to those that need help. On occasion, however, support staff do not spot individual pupils who are struggling and do not always intervene quickly enough.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The quality of care for pupils is strong. The house system is very effective and gives pupils a sense of belonging. Experienced house staff know their pupils well and provide very effective guidance and support for all those who are experiencing difficulty. This helps them to get the most out of school life and enhances their well-being.
- 'Vertical' tutor groups allow pupils from all year groups to mix together. This daily gathering is successful because it develops positive attitudes and team spirit as well as pupils' inter-personal skills. Within form time, older pupils often help younger ones with their work, thereby strengthening their academic progress.
- Pupils who arrive at the school speaking English as an additional language receive daily support from a specially trained tutor. This helps pupils not only with the development of their language skills, but also with their integration into the school.
- The Robert Napier School has strong links with local primary schools. Pupils in Year 5 visit the school for transition events and for taster lessons. This is helpful in developing pupils' confidence for when they join the school in Year 7, so that they can settle quickly.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities know where they can go

for help and are confident about receiving it. Those that are struggling in class are placed on the school's 'access to mainstream' programme. This helps pupils to develop the skills and confidence to make the transition back into mainstream classes when they are ready.

- Pupils in the visually-impaired unit receive well-structured help from specially trained support staff. This enables them to integrate fully into the life of the school and to make good progress from their starting points.
- Since the headteacher introduced a focus on values, the whole school community has worked hard to foster an environment of tolerance and respect. Pupils gave examples of when discriminatory language had been used towards others in the past, but they said this was reducing. They are confident in reporting the use of inappropriate language and trust their teachers to deal effectively with these situations when they arise. Inspectors saw no evidence of discriminatory behaviour during the inspection.
- Assemblies on subjects such as sexting, cyber bullying and the risk of arson support the work done in citizenship lessons and help pupils to understand how to stay safe. The running theme of the 'Robert Napier citizen', which is promoted around the school in a series of corridor displays, helps pupils understand their responsibilities in the wider world. For example, there is a particularly moving display reflecting the local maritime history and remembrance.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- At the moment too many pupils are missing school through poor attendance. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are especially likely to miss lessons or be persistently absent. School staff are working hard with parents on this issue and attendance is improving slowly, but currently high absence rates are having a detrimental effect on pupils' learning and progress.
- The school's focus on clamping down on poor behaviour has led to the number of permanent exclusions rising. The level of fixed-term exclusions is reducing but is still well above national figures.
- There is no doubt that behaviour has improved markedly since the arrival of the new headteacher. Staff, pupils and governors remark on the transformation of behaviour that has taken place. One Year 10 pupil said behaviour is 'ten times better than it used to be' and sixth form students, who have been in the school the longest, said that the school is now a much more orderly environment in which to learn.
- School leaders have insisted on a zero-tolerance approach to poor behaviour and there are clear systems in place for rewards and sanctions. Pupils each carry a reward card, a recently introduced scheme, and they are keen to behave well and gain a reward. This has clearly had an impact because inspectors saw very little evidence of disruptive behaviour in lessons.
- Pupils generally have a positive attitude to learning, enabling lessons to flow smoothly. They are taking an increasing pride in their work and their exercise books and folders are neat and generally well presented.
- Around the large school site, pupils behave well and are punctual to lessons. During breaktimes and lunchtimes, they mingle happily together and show respect for each other and for visitors.
- Pupils wear their new school uniform with pride and they say how much they like it.



They particularly valued the opportunities they had to debate what the new uniform should look like through the school council.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes require improvement, particularly those of disadvantaged pupils and in mathematics. The most able pupils still require more stretch and challenge to enable more of them to realise their potential.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils attaining five GCSEs at grade C or above including English and mathematics was well below average. Attainment in the vast majority of subjects was low. In mathematics, pupils' progress from their starting points was well below average for all groups, but especially so for the most able. Conversely, pupils' progress in English was much better, particularly for middle-ability pupils, although it remained low for the most able.
- Unvalidated school information shows that in 2016, GCSE results improved across the board, especially in science and in geography, although attainment overall remained low. School information for 2016 shows that considerably more pupils attained the highest GCSE grades (A\* to B) than in the previous year. Pupils made even better progress in English than in 2015 and the rates of progress in mathematics also improved, although they were not as good as in English. The progress of disadvantaged pupils in both English and mathematics, while better, was lagging behind that of their peers.
- Current information shows that pupils in the school at the present time are making better progress across the curriculum than in the past. This is because staffing in key subjects like mathematics is now much more stable and there has been a firm and decisive focus from school leaders on improving the quality of teaching and standards of behaviour. Now that pupils have better attitudes to learning they are making better progress.
- Progress for current key stage 4 pupils is better than for those in key stage 3. In particular, pupils in Year 9 have a lot of ground to make up. This is because of a legacy of unstable and poor teaching in the past which hit this year group especially hard. The school is now in a much better position to accelerate pupils' progress in all year groups and the current Year 11 are on track to exceed last year's results.
- Last year, the majority of pupils in Year 7 in receipt of catch-up funding made at least expected progress in mathematics and in English as a result of some effective targeted work.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make slower progress than their peers and their progress is not being tracked with enough precision. Outcomes in 2015 and analysis of data by the school in 2016 show that progress of this group is not as good as others in the school and that differences are not yet diminishing. However, pupils in the visually impaired unit benefit from very intensive individual support so they make faster progress.
- Careers education, information and guidance are increasingly effective features of the school. Pupils in Year 9 work on employability skills and this is consolidated in Year 10 with fortnightly careers lessons and a work-experience placement. Individual careers interviews for Year 11 take place through Medway Youth Trust. This rich provision is effective in helping to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education, training or



employment.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

**Requires improvement**

- 16 to 19 study programmes require improvement because in 2015 and 2016 not enough students studying for AS and A levels achieved highly enough. There were too many variations between different subjects.
- However, outcomes for vocational subjects in 2016 were much stronger and reflected a significant improvement on the previous year.
- All students, both disadvantaged and others, who retook their GCSE in English made good progress in both 2015 and 2016.
- The outcomes from mathematics resits were poor overall in 2015, but showed improvement in 2016 because of better teaching.
- Leadership of the sixth form is improving and much thought has gone into devising an effective programme to meet the needs of students. Leaders have worked hard to raise expectations and evidence of this can be seen in the improved vocational results, the increased numbers joining the sixth form and solid retention rates, which were mostly in line with the national average in 2015. However, disadvantaged students were more likely to leave their courses part way through than other groups.
- The curriculum has been reviewed and changed to provide better pathways to meet the needs of students. The totally academic curriculum of the past has been abandoned in favour of a mixture of academic and vocational courses. This is having an impact on better results in vocational subjects, although there remains more work to be done to bring about similar improvement in academic subjects.
- Where learning is effective, lessons are well planned and engaging. In these lessons, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to formulate appropriate questions, and then check students' understanding. Teachers assess students' work regularly and provide written feedback so that students know what they need to do to improve their learning. There is a high level of challenge in the work set and expectations are high. Where learning is less successful, the pace of work is sometimes too slow.
- Pastoral support in the sixth form is very effective and students greatly appreciate it. The house staff and sixth form team work closely together and students always have someone to go to for help. They value the improved sixth-form study space and being able to bring their own technological devices into school to support them with their work.
- Students appreciate the wide range of careers advice and guidance events; for example, taster days, presentation evenings and careers interviews with an adviser from the Medway Youth Trust. They also receive support with their university applications and useful input about employment post-18 and apprenticeships. As a result, students feel well prepared for their future steps.
- The school has established an 'enrichment core programme' which all students engage in. This means the school is compliant with the requirements of the government's Post-16 study programme. Activities include personal, social and health education, careers advice, study skills, journalism, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and the opportunity to be part of the junior leadership team. This extensive programme helps to broaden students' horizons and develops their knowledge, skills and understanding.

- Students are well prepared for the world of work through their work experience placement in Year 12. They develop independence by arranging this themselves and linking it to their current course of study or future work aspirations.
- Leaders work hard to ensure that students achieve entry to the destination they aspire to once they leave the school. In 2016, all Year 13 students achieved this. There is an upward trend of students going to university and the rates of those not in employment, education or training are falling.
- Sixth formers are part of the vertical tutor group structure with younger students and they find this beneficial. They provide strong role models for the younger students and regularly help them with their learning.

## School details

Unique reference number	138511
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10012334

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

Type of school	Secondary modern (non-selective)
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,008
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Brown
Headteacher	Andrew Minchin
Telephone number	01634 851157
Website	<a href="http://www.robertnapier.org.uk">www.robertnapier.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:trns@robertnapier.org.uk">trns@robertnapier.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	8–9 July 2014

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the curriculum and performance information on pupils' progress and attainment on its website. The school does not comply with Department for Education's guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is a larger-than-average secondary school. It serves a non-selective intake in an area where nearly a third of pupils attend selective grammar schools.
- The Robert Napier School joined the Fort Pitt Thomas Aveling Academy Trust in September 2012. In addition to Fort Pitt and Thomas Aveling schools, the Phoenix Junior School is also a member. The four schools became the Fort Pitt Thomas Aveling

Academies in September 2015. Each school has its own local governing body. The trustees from the Fort Pitt and Thomas Aveling Academies are the overall accountable body.

- Prior attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below the national average.
- The proportion of girls in the school is much lower than in similar schools nationally.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- Nearly 50% of the school's intake receives support through the pupil premium, which is high.
- About 60 pupils a year are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding which is for pupils who did not attain the expected level in English or mathematics at the end of primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disability is much higher than average.
- In 2015, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A small number of sixth form students attend courses at one of the other secondary schools within the trust.
- The school does not use any alternative off-site provision.
- The school has specially resourced provision for visually impaired pupils. This currently caters for 10 pupils.
- The current headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection and has been in post approximately 18 months.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 35 part-lessons. Inspectors also observed form time and an assembly.
- Inspectors met formally with four groups of pupils across every year group, including the sixth form. They also spoke to many pupils informally.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, executive headteacher, other senior leaders and middle leaders, as well as a range of others staff including newly qualified teachers.
- The lead inspector met three representatives of the local governing body including one who is also a trustee of the Fort Pitt Thomas Aveling Academy Trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documents including the school improvement plan, self-evaluation and monitoring records. They also examined information about progress, standards, exclusions, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books in classrooms and also carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work from the last academic year.
- Inspectors took into account approximately 100 questionnaires completed by members of staff and 18 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Paula Sargent, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Luke	Ofsted Inspector
David Powell	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Walters	Ofsted Inspector

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