

The Cavendish School

Warners End Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 3DW

Inspection dates

16–17 May 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Senior leaders and the governing body have failed to improve standards and pupil outcomes.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils make enough progress from their starting points.
- The quality of teaching is highly variable across different subjects. Some teachers have low expectations of pupils. Consequently, outcomes are low in many GCSE subjects.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupil premium funding has a positive impact on the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- The most able pupils make less progress from their starting points than similar pupils nationally.
- Assessment at key stage 3 is inaccurate. Consequently, leaders are not able to track pupil progress precisely and have an overgenerous view of the quality of education they provide.
- Leaders do not rigorously monitor the impact of the actions they take to improve the school. This limits the capacity of the school to improve.
- Leaders have not established a positive ethos in the main school. Pupils identify that the level of peer respect is not high enough.
- A small minority of pupils across subjects and year groups disrupt learning. Some pupils do not have a positive attitude to learning.
- Attendance is low. Leaders' actions to ensure that pupils attend school regularly are ineffective.
- Governors have not been effective in evaluating the impact of leaders' actions to improve outcomes.

The school has the following strengths

- The leadership of the sixth form is effective. Students make good progress.
- Safeguarding is effective.
- The careers information, advice and guidance programme in key stage 4 and the sixth form is good. Pupils and students are well prepared to move onto new destinations.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

■ Leaders must:

- establish a positive learning ethos so that pupils behave well and can learn without interruption
- implement effective tracking and monitoring systems for staff intervention and pupil progress, especially at key stage 3
- ensure that middle leaders and staff accurately assess pupil progress data across key stage 3 and 4, so they can plan support and intervention quickly
- use pupil premium funding to successfully improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
- ensure that leaders are trained and equipped to fulfil their roles effectively, especially pastoral and senior curriculum leaders
- make sure that initiatives to raise attendance are effective and rates of pupil absence decrease.

■ Governors must:

- develop robust systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of senior leaders.

■ Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make good progress from their starting points by:

- ensuring that teachers consistently apply the school's behaviour policy in all lessons
- ensuring that teachers plan challenging lessons that engage pupils more effectively, especially for the most able pupils
- raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve so that standards of work and pupils' progress rapidly improve.

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

Newly qualified teachers should only be appointed following discussion with Her Majesty's Inspector.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate. Since the last inspection, standards have declined significantly. Consequently, progress for pupils in 2016 was significantly below progress of pupils nationally. The newly appointed executive headteacher is leading the school well, but it is too early to see a sustained impact of his actions.
- The executive headteacher has a clear vision and is ambitious for the school. This is yet to be implemented by all staff and leaders. The intended culture of rigorous systems, respectful pupil ethos and improved outcomes is not yet secure.
- Leaders do not base their assessment of school effectiveness on solid evidence, therefore assessment is unreliable. There is an over-reliance on information from middle leaders and checking of this information is weak. Consequently, the school systems are not providing accurate information to improve outcomes.
- Leaders are not yet monitoring pupils' progress in key stage 3 efficiently. They are yet to create a system that allows them to identify underachievement reliably. Consequently, they are unable to intervene quickly where support is needed and the reporting of progress is not secure.
- Leaders do not have a coherent strategy that is successful in improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The spending of pupil premium funding has not been effective, consequently progress for disadvantaged pupils has been in the lowest 10% of pupils nationally for the past two years. It is not clear how Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding has been targeted to improve outcomes.
- Middle leaders are keen and enthusiastic; they want pupils to do well. Individual middle leaders make key decisions that improve pupil progress, for example implementing extra provision for the most able pupils. However, they lack strategic direction and robust systems to carry out their roles effectively.
- Leaders have failed to improve overall pupil attendance. Since the last inspection, attendance has fallen for all pupil groups. However, leaders have been successful in decreasing the number of pupils who are persistently absent.
- Pupil, staff and parent surveys say that poor behaviour of some pupils prevents learning in some lessons; inspectors agree with this view. The new executive headteacher has been effective in initial efforts to address this. However, behaviour in some lessons remains poor.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is effective in managing the resources and funding available to him. He leads a team of well-trained learning support assistants who offer quality assistance in lessons to this group of pupils. However, the knowledge of the impact of their work is limited, as the school lacks robust monitoring systems for pupil progress.
- Newly qualified teachers are positive about the support they receive. They enjoy working at the school and since the new appointment of the executive headteacher they have better guidance on managing behaviour.
- Leaders have implemented a broad curriculum with appropriate qualifications. Pupils

and students have access to a wide range of opportunities including extensive extra-curricular provision.

- Senior leaders are able to accurately judge the quality of teaching and provide informative and suitably critical feedback to teachers.
- The leader of the sixth form is effective. Students make good progress across a range of academic and vocational subjects.

Governance of the school

- Governance requires improvement. In the past, governors were over-reliant on senior leaders to provide information and analysis for them. Governors have made necessary changes to their practice, such as implementing external reviews of the curriculum to ensure that they have reliable information. It is too early to determine the impact of their new way of working.
- Governors have a mostly accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are aware of many initiatives designed to improve pupils' outcomes in school. However, they do not robustly ask school leaders for the impact of these initiatives, for example in improving literacy across the school. Consequently, they have an overgenerous view of the actions school leaders take.
- Governors are fully engaged with the school; they make regular visits and are very committed to the community. Some governors have supported the school through difficult circumstances and bring a welcome expertise to support the new executive headteacher.
- Governors have not ensured that the school website contains information according to government requirements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective because:

- pupils are safe and know how to keep themselves safe in school and online. They report that they are well taught in this area
- pupils know who to talk to if they need support, bullying is rare and they are confident to report any concerns they have to an adult
- all staff receive the necessary training for essential safeguarding including child abuse, neglect, e-safety and extremism
- records of checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school meet statutory requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The standard of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate. Pupils do not make the progress they should compared with pupils nationally.
- Pupils underachieve in several subjects including English, science, history and

information and communication technology.

- The level of challenge in many lessons is too low. Some teachers do not have sufficient expectations of what pupils can achieve, therefore pupils are frequently completing work that does not match their ability.
- Leaders do not identify and support the needs of the most able pupils effectively. Teachers do not plan lessons for this group of pupils well. Outcomes for the most able pupils are not high enough.
- Pupils are not accurately assessed in key stage 3. Senior leaders recognise that the Cavendish Scale for Assessment is not fit for purpose; consequently the progress of pupils in key stage 3 is unclear. The newly appointed executive headteacher has begun the planning to introduce a new assessment system at key stage 3.
- Senior leaders do not have an accurate overview of pupil performance across the curriculum. The progress of pupils is not robustly monitored therefore predictions for 2016 were much higher than the outcomes.
- There is no programme of careers information, advice and guidance at key stage 3.
- Literacy across the curriculum is not managed effectively. The one-hour literacy lesson varies in quality across year groups, therefore its impact is limited.
- Learning support assistants are knowledgeable and have a positive impact on pupil progress and behaviour. The SENCo has a thorough understanding of how to support pupils who have special educational needs and deploys resources well to support their progress.
- In the best lessons, teachers had a positive relationship with pupils. Teachers used subject-specific terms and clear explanations which promoted pupil progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. School leaders are yet to fully implement their chosen programme for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This has contributed to the absence of a distinct whole-school ethos.
- As a result, some pupils do not feel proud to belong to the community and do not show enough respect or kindness to each other.
- Pupils are not confident that teachers are able to deal with the levels of unkindness.
- Tutor time and assemblies are used effectively to address a wide range of issues linked to personal, social and health education (PSHE). Leaders have used these times in the lower school to address ideas such as empathy and conflict resolution. Leaders are at the very early stages of implementing a character education programme and PSHE extended learning days. Leaders teach pupils about British values well.
- The school actively encourages pupil leadership with a forum allowing the pupil voice to be heard and recommendations acted upon. Pupils value this recent initiative.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. Staff care for them well and

pupils appreciate the effort staff make to help them settle into school life in Year 7. Pastoral leaders, especially those overseeing vulnerable pupils, work hard to ensure that pupils are happy and able to access the support they need. Many pupils report that they enjoy coming to school.

- The school's on-site Oasis Centre provides a calm environment for some vulnerable pupils to study. However, the full impact of this provision in terms of pupils' progress is unclear.
- Pupils study a comprehensive e-safety curriculum. Leaders have ensured that pupils access a quality programme on issues such as cyber bullying and child sexual exploitation. Consequently, pupils can discuss these topics maturely.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. The newly appointed executive headteacher has quickly made improvements. However, many lessons still suffer from high levels of disruptive behaviour and non-compliance from pupils.
- The poor behaviour of some pupils prevents others from learning. Pupils told inspectors that they are frustrated by the way other pupils behave and were dispirited by the poor learning environment in some lessons.
- Most parents and staff who responded to the online questionnaires consider poor behaviour as being widespread. However, some respondents commented that the situation has 'recently improved'.
- Staff do not enforce the school's behaviour policy consistently well. As a result, the behaviour is too variable from lesson to lesson. Inspectors observed pupils deliberately disrupting the learning of others yet also observed pupils moderating their behaviour appropriately.
- Senior management do not monitor or analyse lesson behaviour trends well. For example, internal exclusions to the removal room are not monitored robustly. Consequently, leaders have little awareness of what happens over time and therefore are not able to support staff effectively. Leaders acknowledge there are significant training needs for newly appointed pastoral middle leaders.
- Attendance is low. It has fallen in the past year for many groups of pupils including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are eligible for free school meals. Leaders are unable to give solutions or strategies to remedy this. However, the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school has fallen significantly this year.
- Numbers of fixed-term exclusions have risen this year as the new executive headteacher re-establishes acceptable behaviour boundaries; this approach is welcomed by staff and pupils, and the number of extreme incidents of poor behaviour is very low.
- Leaders have employed a full-time school counsellor to mentor pupils at risk of exclusion. A partnership with a local pupil referral unit gives extra capacity, with specialist staff supporting pupils who have very challenging behaviour. This ensures that the incidence of extreme behaviour is very low.

- Pupils referred to alternative provision in the local authority engage with it well. Leaders provide a full programme of PSHE and pastoral support; consequently many pupils have positive outcomes, with some managing a partial or full return to school.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- The attainment of pupils when they join the school is typically below the national average. When pupils left Year 11 at the end of 2016, their attainment across a range of subjects was well below the national average.
- The school was well below the national floor standard for pupil progress in GCSE for 2016.
- The attainment of pupils in religious education, history, drama, science and computer science was significantly lower than pupils nationally.
- In 2016, progress in English was significantly below average and was in the lowest 10% nationally; this included the progress of boys and disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders have not ensured that the pupil premium funding has a positive impact on the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. They do not routinely check or evaluate the effect of funded initiatives on outcomes. Consequently, the progress for this group of pupils is inadequate.
- Leaders do not track or monitor the progress of the most able pupils including the most able disadvantaged pupils. Leaders do not ensure the delivery of a curriculum that is suited to the needs of this group. Consequently, the most able pupils make the least progress from their starting points in English and mathematics.
- Inspectors found the progress of current pupils was hindered by the lack of challenging work and low expectations of teaching staff for what pupils can achieve.
- In 2016, the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was significantly below the progress made by all pupils nationally with similar starting points. However, for some of these pupils currently in school, progress is beginning to improve as their needs are being better catered for. This progress remains fragile.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in mathematics is positive.
- The progress of pupils across key stage 3 is not strategically managed. Leaders are unable to accurately state the progress for groups of pupils or set appropriate targets.
- Leaders do not have a clear view of pupils' progress at key stage 4 because the assessments at key stage 3 are unreliable. Leaders place an overemphasis on what teachers report might happen.
- The quality of careers information, advice and guidance at key stage 4 and 5 is good. All pupils are successful in securing education, employment or training when they leave school.
- Outcomes in key stage 5 are good, the majority having positive scores for value added. This shows students in the sixth form are doing as well as or better than students nationally.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The leadership of the sixth form is effective. There is a strong ethos of achievement, students express a 'hope of doing well' and are keen to learn.
- Students make progress in line with national performance; leaders monitor and support progress well. Outcomes for many courses are positive. Those who entered the sixth form without a grade C in mathematics and/or English are required to resit those exams. Success rates for retakes are positive.
- Students benefit from being in a self-contained building away from the main school. Although it is small, there is a varied curriculum of vocational and academic subjects. The school has a consortium arrangement with two neighbouring schools and a few students access courses across the two sites.
- The PSHE programme, including study skills, CV writing and employability weeks, is effective. As such, students are well prepared for the next stage of education or work. Careers information, advice and guidance in the sixth form are good therefore all students move onto university, apprenticeships, further education study or work.
- Leaders ensure that staff moderate student work accurately. This gives staff a realistic picture of student progress and consequently staff can better support students who are struggling.
- Students benefit from a strong programme of extra-curricular activities including sports. These complement the main programme of study well. All students are expected to participate in work experience that matches their future aspirations. Safeguarding in the sixth form is effective.
- Leaders know what they need to do to improve student progress and outcomes in some subjects. Where standards of teaching are lower, outcomes are not as strong. Leaders have already invested additional intervention into subjects where teaching is weaker, and they have appropriate plans to ensure that all teachers challenge students more and hold higher expectations of them.
- Leaders recognise that changes in staffing meant they did not access student progress data in a timely manner. As a result, some areas of underperformance were not addressed quickly enough.

School details

Unique reference number	117528
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10031394

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
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	843
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carole Connelly
Executive Headteacher	Mr Gary Lewis
Telephone number	01442 404333
Website	www.cavendish.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@cavendish.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 May 2015

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The large majority of students are from White British backgrounds and few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium is average. This is additional funding allocated by the government for students who are looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is average.

- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for Year 11 pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The sixth form is part of a local consortium involving two other schools. It offers a varied curriculum of vocational and academic subjects.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in February 2017 and joins the school part time in a support capacity until a substantive headteacher is appointed.
- The school offers work-related training in key stage 4 for a small number of pupils at the local authority alternative provision, the Dacorum Education Centre.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the structure of the governing body or pecuniary interests of governors on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a wide range of subjects across three key stages for two days. They visited 30 parts of lessons, conducted two learning walks, and visited registration time.
- All senior leaders from the school took part in joint lesson observations or learning walks.
- A wide sample of pupils' work from each year group, across many subjects, was scrutinised.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders and governors.
- Inspectors evaluated the school's arrangements for safeguarding, including documentation, the central record of staff recruitment checks and staff safeguarding training.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school information including strategic plans, external reviews and records of checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Inspectors also considered information on the school website, behaviour and attendance records and a wide range of school policies.
- Inspectors took into account 69 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire including 35 free-text responses. There were 33 responses to the online survey by school staff.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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