

Knole Academy

Knole Academy, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3LE

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2017

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal is ambitious. She ensures that the school is inclusive for all pupils.
- Governors and leaders have addressed the school's weaknesses since the last inspection. This has led to pupils making better progress. Governors have a clear vision of what they want to achieve. Their actions continue to raise standards across the school.
- The principal and senior leaders have ensured that academic standards have risen, especially in mathematics in key stage 4.
- Middle leaders use information from assessments well to identify support for pupils. However, senior leaders do not set targets for pupils that are ambitious enough. As a result, some pupils, particularly the lower-ability pupils, are not always sufficiently challenged.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Their questioning generally helps pupils, including the most able, develop their thinking further. Occasionally, teachers' questions are too low-level.
- Teachers' feedback is precise. Pupils have opportunities to reflect on and improve their work. This deepens their knowledge and understanding.
- In the sixth form, students are making good progress. Unvalidated information shows the proportion of A* to B grades increased in 2017 across all subjects. Standards in all subjects are improving.
- Students in the sixth form are articulate, confident and use complex language in their speech and writing. High-quality careers education and guidance prepare pupils well for their next steps.
- Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Pupils feel safe and staff support them well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. There is a strong culture of respect across the school. Pupils are helpful and polite and enjoy attending the school.
- Pupils have the opportunity to experience a broad curriculum. A wide range of additional activities provides many cultural, creative and sporting experiences. Pupils value these opportunities.
- The attendance of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, had been improving but fell last year to below the national average.
- Additional funding is used effectively, although leaders do not always evaluate its impact precisely enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress further, by:
 - ensuring that the targets set for pupils are ambitious but realistic, especially for lower-ability pupils
 - making sure that teachers set work of appropriate challenge for all groups of pupils, including the lower-ability pupils
 - ensuring that teachers' questioning consistently encourages pupils to think deeply
 - refining the evaluation and use of assessment information
- Improve pupils' attendance, particularly for those pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have patterns of poor attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders are ambitious, inclusive and work effectively to ensure that pupils do well and are happy. They plan strategically and know the school's strengths and weaknesses. Since the last inspection, leaders have acted to ensure that they evaluate teaching and learning more rigorously. This has led to improvements across the school. When weaknesses exist, leaders take prompt action to improve the quality of teaching.
- Leaders have established a strong culture of professional development across the school. They have a secure understanding of what effective teaching looks like. Leaders use this to plan high-quality training and development opportunities for staff. For example, mentoring and coaching between staff provides opportunities to share and learn from good practice. Teachers, including those who are newly qualified and trainee teachers, feel valued and supported well by leaders. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning across the school has improved.
- Furthermore, teachers' performance management is thorough. Leaders set objectives linked to pupils' results and school priorities. The principal makes regular checks to make sure that these will improve pupils' achievement.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. For example, all pupils are able to take geography, history and French. The choices available to pupils at GCSE prepare them well for the next stage of their education. Many cultural, creative and sporting experiences further enrich the broad range of activities that take place beyond lessons. For example, visits to universities help to raise pupils' aspirations.
- The curriculum is designed well to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers promote this effectively, for example in tutor time when they challenge pupils by presenting them with moral dilemmas.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain because of high-quality tutor discussions and through assemblies. Pupils have a secure understanding of their rights and responsibilities and what it means to be a good citizen and to live in a democratic society. For example, the school council provides opportunities for pupils to have a say about their school. They gain further knowledge of democracy through the tutor and personal, social and health education programmes.
- Leaders have developed the 'Knole passport' to recognise key stage 3 pupils' achievements. This feeds into the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme from Year 9, which is very popular and helps to strengthen pupils' wider skills and understanding of life in modern Britain.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used well and is having a marked impact on improving pupils' reading ages and mathematical skills. Pupils who did not make enough progress in key stage 2 are provided with helpful extra support in literacy and mathematics.
- Subject leaders know their departments well. They make good use of assessment data to identify where to give more support to pupils. This leads to pupils making good progress. However, senior leaders do not always use information from pupils' assessments well enough to help identify what needs to improve most at a whole-

school level.

- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) provides strong leadership. The SENCo uses additional funding well to enable pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to better access the curriculum. Effective strategies are in place to support these pupils and they make good progress as a consequence. However, leaders' evaluations of which interventions work best to raise pupils' achievement are not so well developed.
- Leaders' spending on supporting disadvantaged pupils is comprehensive and well thought out. However, leaders do not identify the impact on individual pupils well enough. This means that they do not always make appropriate adaptations to support quickly enough.
- Parents' comments about the school are mostly positive. Many value the support and guidance provided and comment on the dedication shown by the staff to support the pupils. Some parents expressed concern about not being able to make appointments easily for parents' evenings and the quality of information they receive about the progress their children are making.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a clear vision. They know the school well which helps them to plan the improvements needed and provide appropriate challenge to senior leaders. The governing body manages the budget effectively so that pupils' learning improves. For example, their use of extra funding in supporting mathematics has led to a rise in standards. Governors hold leaders to account stringently and check the performance management of teachers well to ensure that links to pay progression are clear.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils. The recording of these checks meets statutory requirements.
- Leaders have a clear vision for safeguarding and see it as everyone's responsibility. All staff have received appropriate training. Policies are up to date and cover issues such as sexting. Staff understand their role and are knowledgeable about safeguarding issues.
- Leaders have acted to ensure that pupils are safe on the open site. For example, adults and sixth-form students all wear badges and the external doors are securely locked during lessons.
- Adults work well with families and outside agencies to ensure that extra support is available to pupils when needed. Leaders understand the needs of vulnerable pupils and work hard to make sure that appropriate external support is provided.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers know pupils' strengths and weaknesses well and plan learning carefully so that pupils understand what they have to do in order to make progress. Pupils are encouraged to attempt more challenging work routinely.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Many use this to support the development of pupils' wider skills, including their literacy skills. For example, in a GCSE physical education (PE) lesson, pupils were able to write to a high standard using correct technical terminology.
- Many teachers offer a high level of challenge for pupils. For example, in art, PE, mathematics and French, where challenge and expectations are routinely high, pupils make strong progress.
- Teachers offer a range of approaches that develop pupils' thinking successfully. For example, some teachers use skilful questioning to challenge pupils to deepen their understanding and help them to make good progress. Similarly, many teachers focus their questioning to ensure that groups of pupils, for example disadvantaged pupils, are included fully in lessons. This helps pupils to make good progress. Occasionally, teachers' questioning does not support pupils well enough to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers' feedback is precise so that pupils know what they have to do to make their work better. Pupils have opportunities to reflect and improve their work. Teachers use the school's assessment policy consistently so that pupils know the grade they are working at and how to improve further.
- Teachers set homework that is appropriate for the work pupils are doing and in line with the school's policy. A minority of parents raised concerns over the amount given, but nevertheless the majority like the new online system introduced in September.
- Most pupils and teachers share high aspirations for pupils' achievement. Pupils take pride in their work. They are very aware of their target grades and often aspire to achieve higher. However, leaders sometimes do not set demanding enough targets. This leads to some teachers not challenging the pupils well enough, particularly lower-ability pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are happy and feel supported well by staff. The relationships pupils have with staff are a strength of the school.
- There is a strong culture of respect in the school. Year 7 reported that they are not aware of any bullying. Older pupils report that when bullying occurs, it is infrequent, and is swiftly dealt with by staff. Pupils do not use homophobic language.
- Pupils' responses to Ofsted's student questionnaire were very positive about Knole Academy, especially from the sixth form.

- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online. Teachers ensure that pupils are aware of the dangers and risks in wider society through the tutor programme, in assemblies and in some subjects.
- Pupils who attend off-site provision at the Two Bridges Pupil Referral Unit are able to follow a full range of GCSE courses. Teachers work closely with alternative providers to enable these pupils to succeed, and check that they are safe.
- Pupils are very positive about the extra opportunities to take part in activities outside lessons. They enjoy the range of sporting and drama activities. Pupils described the recent drama production as 'amazing'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There is a calm atmosphere around the school and pupils are helpful and polite. All pupils are smart and wear their uniform with pride. Litter around the site is rare.
- Pupils move around the school showing patience and respect towards each other. Even when there are difficulties in getting through narrow doorways they are sensible.
- In most lessons, pupils focus on their work and off-task behaviour is rare. Occasionally, when activities are not well planned, pupils find it more difficult to concentrate.
- Leaders have been effective in reducing fixed-term exclusions, especially for those who have previously been excluded more than once.
- Whole-school attendance had been improving but declined last year, particularly for those pupils who are frequently absent and those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Leaders and governors are taking appropriate action to reverse this drop in attendance, but it is too soon to see the impact of this.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils start school in Year 7 with levels of attainment that are broadly average. In 2016, Year 11 pupils' progress was average overall and above average for girls. However, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds made slower progress.
- Current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils in all year groups, make strong progress across the curriculum. Effective use of pupil premium funding is helping to remove barriers to enable disadvantaged pupils to make better progress.
- The provisional GCSE results for 2017 show that the proportion of pupils achieving a good pass in both GCSE English and mathematics has improved and is now similar to or above national averages. Improvement in mathematics has been rapid following weaker outcomes in previous years. This is due to improvement in the quality of teaching.
- The provisional GCSE results also indicate that pupils' attainment in many subjects in 2017 was similar to or better than last year. Pupils are now making better progress across a wider range of subjects, including those where previous pupils had not achieved so well. Furthermore, pupils who attend off-site provision make good progress and they are able to take a broad range of GCSE courses.

- Current pupils' attainment is improving in most subjects. School information and scrutiny of pupils' books indicates that current pupils attain better than previous pupils did at this point in their studies. However, targets for pupils' attainment at GCSE are not always demanding enough.
- In 2017, the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, achieved more A*/A grade passes in a variety of subjects compared with 2016. When teachers provide more demanding work, pupils rise to the challenge.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Funding to provide interventions to support them is used effectively.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education due to high-quality careers education and guidance provided. Teachers work closely with youth workers to support those pupils at risk of not continuing in education, training or employment.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Students in the sixth form achieve well. Teachers provide opportunities for students to learn in greater depth. Students are able to challenge each other's thinking in lessons. As a result, they make good progress and their understanding deepens.
- Students are fluent, confident and use complex language well. This shows their deep understanding of their work. Students quickly learn new skills in practical subjects due to effective teaching. For example, in a Year 12 textiles lesson students used a range of new techniques to make good progress.
- Progress is improving in all areas, including in subjects that were weaker before. The number of A* to B grades increased in 2017. In subjects where results were previously below the national average, they are now improving. Students' success at A level enables them to progress successfully and access higher education or employment.
- Leaders ensure that the school's curriculum meets students' needs well. The courses on offer are relevant and individualised. This prepares students well for higher education or employment. The retention rate for students from Year 12 to Year 13 is high. Students value the careers education and guidance that they receive. All Year 13 students who applied to university gained places in 2017.
- Students who did not achieve standard pass grades in English and/or mathematics at GCSE are making strong progress compared to other students nationally. Leaders ensure that these students are following the courses most appropriate to them.
- All students are able to complete work experience. Enrichment days provide students with further opportunities, for example from driver training to discussions on controversial themes such as anti-radicalisation.

School details

Unique reference number	136128
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10036943

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,333
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	180
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Anne-Marie Lenehan
Principal	Mary Boyle
Telephone number	01732 454608
Website	www.knoleacademy.org
Email address	mboyle@knoleacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	17–18 November 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school, with a sixth form.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small proportion of pupils do not speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is

similar to the national average.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Some pupils attend off-site provision at Two Bridges Pupil Referral Unit, Southborough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 56 lessons, including a number of short visits to classrooms, tutor rooms and assemblies. Several lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. During visits to classes, inspectors looked at pupils' work in books.
- Inspectors also examined a selection of pupils' work from key stages 3 and 4.
- Meetings were held with staff, including newly qualified teachers, academic senior and middle leaders, pastoral leaders and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of 130 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as written comments submitted by 157 parents.
- Pupils' views were gathered from meetings with groups from Years 7 to 11, the sixth form and from Ofsted's student questionnaire. Informal conversations with pupils took place around the school site.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation. This included leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, the school's plans for improvement, information about standards and pupils' progress, the school's website, records of behaviour and attendance, governors' minutes and a range of policies and information including those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Christopher Lee, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Peter Swan	Ofsted Inspector
Victoria Kirby	Ofsted Inspector

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