

# Hugh Christie Technology College

White Cottage Road, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PU

## Inspection dates

5–6 December 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The executive principal has high aspirations and ambitions for all pupils that encourage them to make good progress. Leaders ensure that an ethos of respect for others exists.
- Teachers' good support for pupils' well-being and pastoral development helps them to be successful. This is a strength of the school. Pupils are happy and show a desire to learn.
- Governors know the school well. They consistently challenge leaders to ensure that standards continue to rise.
- Current pupils in all year groups make good progress due to leaders' successful work to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Teachers know pupils well and are committed to improving their achievement. They plan work well to match the needs of different pupils.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to question pupils deeply to extend their knowledge and understanding.
- All pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. The extra-curricular opportunities are extensive and enrich pupils' learning experiences.
- Attendance is below national average. Leaders' actions are improving current attendance, although slowly.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported well, enabling them to access the work. These pupils are making rapid progress to catch up with their peers.
- Leadership of the sixth form is strong. Students have access to a wide range of courses. Students taking A-level qualifications, including disadvantaged students, make good progress.
- Parents are very complimentary about the support provided to pupils. Parents speak positively about the excellent communication between school and home to help pupils succeed.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The previous high level of exclusions is reducing rapidly, as actions to support pupils more effectively are working.
- A minority of teachers do not follow the school's assessment policy consistently enough.
- Sixth-form students taking vocational qualifications have not done as well in the past as those taking A levels. However, the trend is improving and the gap with other students nationally is reducing.

## **Full report**

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

- Improve the attendance of all pupils.
- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning, to accelerate pupils' progress by:
  - ensuring that remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and assessment are reduced
  - ensuring that sixth-form students' achievements in vocational courses are similar to other students nationally.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive principal has created a strong supportive culture in the school that enables pupils to flourish. Leaders have established high aspirations and ambitions for all pupils that lead to them making good progress. The ethos of respect for others is very strong in the school. One parent wrote, 'The school is first class; my child has blossomed here.'
- Leaders know the school well and have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching and learning, which is good across the school. Leaders understand the school's priorities and their role in raising standards further, and work successfully in addressing these aspects.
- Leaders have provided ongoing, effective professional development for teachers that has successfully driven up the quality of teaching and learning, and improved outcomes for pupils. Newly qualified teachers feel very well supported. For example, one commented, 'This is a really happy school.'
- Additional funding, including that provided for disadvantaged pupils, for those who have SEN and/or disabilities and for those who need additional support with literacy and numeracy, is used to good effect. Leaders have clear plans and evaluate the impact of the funding to ensure that it makes a positive difference to pupils' learning.
- Strong leadership helps pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to make excellent progress due to the effective support and interventions provided.
- A large majority of parents speak very positively about the school and would recommend it to other parents. Parents are complimentary about the high level of support that staff provide to their children. For example, one parent commented, 'The school offers fantastic opportunities from Year 7 to Year 13. They always reply quickly to any queries and communication is good.' Another described the school as having a 'nurturing environment and positive attitude'.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, and enables all pupils to study the full range of courses. Pupils are supported and guided well to ensure that they follow appropriate courses for their ability. Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer such as music, drama, school productions, sporting activities, robotics club and chess club. This helps pupils to develop further skills beyond the taught curriculum.
- Leaders prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain through a wide range of opportunities. Pupils are inspired by their visits to other countries within Europe and further afield, such as the USA and Tanzania. In addition, pupils have opportunities to be involved in charity work, for example supporting the local food bank. As a result, pupils' awareness of social and moral issues is well developed.
- Leaders strengthen pupils' understanding of fundamental British values. For example, pupils took part in mock elections in both the general election and referendum. Consequently, pupils develop a good understanding of democracy.
- The leadership team has sought appropriate external support to help develop aspects

of the school that need to improve further. As such, leaders are better informed in their decision-making and prepared to be held to account for their actions. Certainly, there is no complacency among leaders in improving pupils' opportunities further.

- Leaders have been quick to act to ensure that the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report have been addressed. Pupils' opportunities for extended writing are evident and the most able are challenged well in the majority of lessons.
- Teachers' performance management is thorough and closely monitored by middle leaders. Where inconsistencies in teaching exist, leaders provide largely effective support and strategies to improve teaching and learning. Leaders use professional development effectively to encourage, challenge and support teachers' improvement. There is further to go to ensure that this work makes an equally strong impact on all teaching.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors have a clear vision for the school and see education as the means to improving pupils' life chances. They are reflective, and committed to ensuring that the school is fully inclusive for all pupils. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and this enables them to hold leaders to account.
- A proactive approach is evident in seeking the views of staff and pupils. For example, a group of governors are working with middle leaders and student leaders to review the curriculum offered, so as to ensure that it fully meets pupils' needs.
- Governors monitor the use of the additional funding the school receives effectively to ensure that it is impacting on pupils' outcomes and healthy lifestyles, including disadvantaged and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- All governors take their role very seriously in keeping pupils safe. The nominated governor attends safeguarding meetings and checks the school's records regularly, so governors know that leaders' actions in keeping pupils safe are effective.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and this is a real strength of the school. Pupils feel confident about talking to an adult as a result of the supportive culture that exists. All staff understand their role in keeping pupils safe and are vigilant and rigorous in following up any concerns. Pupils know what to do and who to approach, should they have any concerns around their safety.
- All appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils. The recording of these checks meets statutory requirements. The site security keeps pupils safe.
- Staff receive comprehensive training in safeguarding. The school's policy on safeguarding is comprehensive and fully up to date.
- Pupils are taught well about aspects of safeguarding. Staff are diligent in following up any concerns they have about pupils with the appropriate external agencies.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and this enables them routinely to encourage pupils to deepen their knowledge. Lessons are well planned so that pupils are able to easily access the learning.
- In a wide range of lessons and across both key stages, pupils are encouraged to respond thoughtfully to teachers' skilful and probing questions. This leads to pupils improving their thinking, communication and reasoning skills, for example in English, history and science.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils, ensuring that pupils are mostly challenged well. The positive relationships between teachers and pupils promote an effective climate for learning.
- Teaching assistants support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities extremely well. This enables them to access their work and make rapid progress to catch up with their peers. Teachers adapt the learning effectively to support these pupils.
- Pupils in the specially resourced provision are supported well and fully integrated into mainstream lessons. They are able to access the curriculum, with appropriate adjustments and their teaching assistants' support. This enables these pupils to make similar progress to other pupils. Parents of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities speak very highly of how well the school caters for their children's individual needs.
- The literacy programme in Years 7 and 8 leads to pupils' reading ages improving rapidly, especially for those pupils who are behind in reading when they join the school. Pupils are regularly encouraged to write creatively, which stimulates extended writing in many subjects. Pupils are also encouraged to read more widely. They enjoy receiving a book on their birthday in Year 8.
- Higher-level questioning by teachers encourages and challenges the most able pupils. Teachers who use the school's assessment policy well help pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve their work further. Teachers are not consistently precise enough in using the policy for pupils to know how to make their work better in all subjects.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the minor variabilities that remain in the quality of teaching and assessment.

## 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 confident, feel safe, know how to be successful and encourage each other to do well.
- Leaders have developed a caring ethos throughout the school community that is exemplified in the way pupils are respectful of each other's needs. Vulnerable pupils spoke about how they are able to develop their independence. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. For example, one parent,

expressing views typical of others, commented, 'They have gone above and beyond to support her... and make her feel confident in her abilities. I feel that all the teachers really care and are willing to help anyone.'

- Pupils say that bullying is rare, including homophobic bullying. On the rare occasions that bullying does occur, staff deal it with promptly and effectively. An informative personal, social, health and economic education programme encourages pupils to value others' diversity positively.
- Pupils take on additional responsibilities as student leaders in Years 10 and 11. In this role, they become involved in the school parliament that helps them to have a role in shaping the direction of the school. Student leaders particularly appreciate being involved in discussions with governors on making changes to the curriculum. They enjoy having additional responsibilities as learning, behaviour or peer mentors in supporting other pupils.
- Pupils are taught well how to keep themselves safe, including online. Their understanding about extremism and radicalisation is strong.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good, including in the alternative provision attended by a small number. They are polite and courteous. Pupils were welcoming to the inspectors and very willing to help them find their way around the school. Pupils respect the school environment, as exemplified by absence of litter around the site.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and, mostly, move purposefully at lesson-change times. In lessons, pupils are keen to learn and disruptions to learning by pupils are rare.
- Leaders have been effective in providing support to help a minority of pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour. For example, a behaviour specialist and counsellors work usefully with these pupils. This work has been highly effective in reducing the previously high levels of fixed-term exclusion, including for those who have been excluded more than once.
- The attendance of pupils making use of alternative provision has improved and they are now better engaged in their learning. Some of these pupils are now able to return to mainstream education.
- Historically, attendance for all pupils has been well below that of other pupils nationally. Leaders know that this is a key priority for the school. However, although their actions are gradually improving attendance for all groups of pupils, figures remain below national averages.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Current pupils are making good progress across a wide range of subjects, including in English and mathematics. This is due to leaders' strong actions in supporting staff to improve teaching.
- Historically, the progress of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in their GCSEs has

been below that of other pupils nationally. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' books clearly shows that current pupils are working at the standard expected in most subjects. Consequently, they are being better prepared for their future learning compared with past pupils. The progress of pupils in science, history and modern foreign languages is particularly strong.

- While pupils are usually sure how to improve their work, this is not always the case and hinders them in making even better progress.
- Leaders' effective and precise use of funding for disadvantaged pupils is improving these pupils' achievement well. Disadvantaged pupils are achieving as well as other pupils in the school and the differences from other pupils nationally are diminishing.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress in their learning and often attain a standard of work similar to that of other pupils. This is because their needs are quickly identified and supportive strategies are in place to enable them to do well.
- Year 7 pupils who require additional literacy and numeracy support are quickly catching up with other pupils, especially in their reading. Pupils' standards in literacy are being further raised in Year 8 through the comprehensive writing programme.
- Pupils who attend the SEN resource base are well integrated into mainstream lessons. They receive effective support from the 'Skills Centre' facility to ensure that they make substantial progress. Pupils who attend alternative provision are provided with a good range of courses that enables them to succeed at GCSE, or to be reintegrated back into mainstream schools to complete their education.
- Careers information and guidance is very strong, ensuring that pupils are fully aware of the wide range of choices available to them. Pupils have frequent opportunities to gain insight into the world of work through mock interviews, university visits, apprenticeship visits and work experience.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make good progress across many subjects.

## **16 to 19 study programmes**

**Good**

- Leadership of the sixth form is strong. Leaders have ensured that there is a comprehensive range of courses to meet the needs of all students. Progress made by students taking A-level qualifications, including disadvantaged students, is above the national average and has improved in recent years.
- Teachers' questioning of students helps them to consolidate their knowledge and challenges them to gain a deeper understanding of their work. Teachers' precise feedback enables students to become independent learners because they know how to improve further.
- Careers information and guidance are strong throughout the school, including in the sixth form. Students value the information they receive as this helps them to know the wide range of choices available to them.
- Leaders' strong support and high expectations of students ensure that their attendance is good. The vast majority of students successfully complete their courses so they

continue in education, employment or training, including apprenticeships. Well over half of the students continue their studies into higher education. Sixth-form students typically said, 'We love it here', 'We have everything we need' and 'This school makes us believe in ourselves; the culture is very aspirational.'

- Teachers ensure that students know how to keep themselves safe and are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Students are provided with numerous opportunities to develop their leadership skills, for example as 'head' students, senior prefects and to undertake overseas charity work.
- Teachers enable students who did not achieve English or mathematics at GCSE to make similar progress to other students nationally. The number of students gaining the higher pass grades has increased.
- Leaders are implementing a range of effective strategies to improve any aspect of provision that is currently weaker, for example in vocational qualifications. Students taking these qualifications have not done as well in the past as those taking A levels. However, the trend is improving, and the differences between them and other students nationally are diminishing.

## School details

Unique reference number	118903
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10039658

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

Type of school	Secondary Modern
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	820
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Mason
Executive Principal	Mr Jon Barker
Telephone number	01732 353544
Website	<a href="http://www.hughchristie.kent.sch.uk/">www.hughchristie.kent.sch.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@tonbridgefederation.co.uk">admin@tonbridgefederation.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	23–24 January 2014

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is a smaller-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 SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with middle- and low-prior attainment on entry is well above the national average. Conversely, the proportion with high-prior attainment on entry 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 through the local authority.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 58 lessons, including a number of short visits to tutor rooms. Several lessons were visited 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, governors including the chair of the governing body, the executive principal, head of school, and an external adviser working with the school. Inspectors took account of 58 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors took account of 72 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as written comments submitted by 61 parents, telephone calls to five parents, and inspectors spoke to two parents in person.
- Pupils' views were gathered from meetings with groups from Years 7 to 11 and 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 self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, information about standards and pupils' progress, the school's website, records of behaviour and attendance, external reviews, governors' minutes and a range of policies and information including those relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Christopher Lee, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Taj Bhambra	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Rodin	Ofsted Inspector

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