

# Abbey College, Ramsey

Abbey Road, Ramsey, Cambridgeshire PE26 1DG

## Inspection dates

13–14 March 2018

<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	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have established a culture of high expectations and aspirations for pupils. Their effective actions have resulted in significant improvements in pupils' attendance and behaviour since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite, respectful of the opinions of others, and prepared and willing to learn. This helps them to make good progress in a range of subjects.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum provides a broad range of opportunities and reflects the school's values. It supports pupils' personal and academic development, preparing them well for life in modern Britain.
- Pastoral leaders know their pupils well. They provide help so that pupils to grow in confidence and become successful learners.
- Leaders make good use of external support to improve and review aspects of the school's work. Teachers are positive about the training and support provided for them.
- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well through their regular checks on leaders' work.
- The sixth form provides a broad range of opportunities for students. Students make good progress in their courses and almost all move on to their chosen career or education pathway.
- Middle leaders know how their actions link to whole-school priorities for improvement. There are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment where middle leaders do not hold teachers to account as effectively as they could do.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. However, not all teachers consistently provide the highest levels of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Teachers use their specialist subject knowledge to support pupils in deepening their understanding. Those teaching outside their specialism sometimes lack the skills and knowledge needed to do this. This is particularly the case in science.
- Disadvantaged pupils are now making good progress. However, leaders have not precisely checked the impact made by focused projects on the achievements of this group of pupils. Consequently, opportunities to further improve on successful work have been missed.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring that:
  - non-specialist subject teachers, particularly in science, develop their knowledge and skills
  - staff provide a consistently high level of challenge for all pupils, and particularly for those who are most able.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that all middle leaders tackle inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and hold staff to account more effectively
  - precisely evaluating the impact of the strategies put in place to ensure that disadvantaged pupils always achieve as well as they can.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Senior leaders have created a culture where expectations are high. Teachers have been challenged to improve the quality of teaching. Most have risen to the challenge and have succeeded. Consequently, most pupils make good progress from their different starting points.
- Leaders have ensured that the attendance and behaviour of all pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds have improved significantly. As a result, attendance is above the national average and almost all pupils have positive attitudes that support their learning.
- Leaders have accurately identified the priorities for improvement in the school, including the need to improve rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils. Leaders regularly check to see what difference their actions are making. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use this to inform future plans for improvement.
- Pastoral leaders are well trained and effective in their roles. They are confident to make the right decisions to ensure that pupils have the help and support they need. Pupils, and parents and carers, are overwhelmingly positive about the care and support provided by the school.
- Leaders' careful planning ensures that the curriculum supports pupils' academic and personal development. The curriculum offers a wide range of subjects in both academic and vocational courses. There is a variety of extra-curricular activities and clubs, including sports clubs, science club, musical theatre and a film club. There are also many extra-curricular trips to support learning, including language exchange visits, a history trip to Berlin and Krakow and a visit to an outdoor activity centre.
- The school makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have social and moral education lessons until the end of key stage 4 and all pupils take GCSE religious education. Leaders have established links with an Islamic faith school in Peterborough to support pupils' awareness of other cultures and beliefs. Pupils discuss and debate moral issues in different lessons. For example, pupils in a Year 11 biology lesson sensitively discussed whether parents should share with their children the risks of having inherited a genetic condition. The school prepares pupils well for life in modern British society.
- Leaders have made good use of external support available to them, particularly from the Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust. They have used this external support to gain independent views of whether their actions are having the positive effect they had planned. Leaders have acted quickly on advice provided to further strengthen work in different areas of the school, for example in the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to ensure that it is making a positive difference for pupils.
- Teachers and middle leaders feel well supported by the headteacher and other senior leaders. Leaders' regular checks on teaching are used to share what works best to help pupils with their learning. Teachers, including newly qualified teachers, are positive

about the training and development provided for them. This is having a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching. However, some non-specialist teachers, particularly in science, need further training to ensure that pupils, including the most able pupils, make more rapid progress.

- Subject leaders are clear about the whole-school priorities for improvement and how their actions contribute to achieving these. They carry out regular checks on the quality of teaching with senior leaders. Some subject leaders are not holding teachers to account for the difference that their teaching makes to pupils' progress as stringently as others. As a result, there remain some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across different subjects.
- Leaders use the extra government funding they receive for disadvantaged pupils to provide additional support for these pupils. Their actions have secured notable improvements in the attendance and behaviour of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders acknowledge that funding has made less of a difference to improving their achievement in some subjects. This is because leaders have not precisely identified the individual actions that have made the most difference to improving pupils' learning and progress, and seized the opportunity to build further upon these.

## **Governance of the school**

- The governing body is effective. Governors work alongside senior leaders to evaluate the work of the school and contribute to planning for improvement.
- Governors make regular visits to the school to check on the work of leaders and managers. As a result, they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They ensure that leaders focus on the right priorities for the school and provide challenge when necessary to check that leaders' actions are securing improvements.
- Governors ensure that leaders use additional funding, including the Year 7 catch-up funding and funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, appropriately. Governors acknowledge that although the pupil premium funding has improved the attendance and behaviour of disadvantaged pupils, it has had less effect on improving rates of progress across all subjects in previous years than it could have done.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All relevant checks on the suitability of adults to work with young people are completed. The chair of governors regularly checks that records are maintained accurately.
- Safeguarding is an established part of the culture of the school. Staff have all received relevant training, including in the 'Prevent' duty, and receive regular updates. They are clear about what to do if they have any concerns, and the designated safeguarding lead acts upon these swiftly and makes prompt referrals to external agencies when appropriate.
- Pupils learn how to stay safe online and are aware of all forms of bullying. Anti-bullying

ambassadors are available to support other pupils and the school regularly revisits the topic of bullying. Pupils reported that bullying is rare and that adults deal with any incidents effectively. This agrees with evidence gathered by inspectors and the very large majority of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers have established a positive climate for learning. Pupils are confident to ask and answer questions to deepen their understanding. Many teachers use questioning skilfully to probe pupils' understanding and check on their learning.
- Most teachers consistently follow the school's assessment policy. Pupils respond to the insightful guidance and next steps for learning provided by their teachers. As a result, they improve the quality of their work and know what they need to do to reach higher levels of attainment.
- The well-established routines and high expectations regarding behaviour mean that pupils are ready to learn from the start of lessons.
- Teachers know the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and appropriately plan activities to support their learning. This contributes to current pupils making good progress from their different starting points. Additional adults provide effective support for the pupils that they work with. Their ongoing assessment of pupils' progress contributes to pupils' good achievement in a range of subjects.
- Teachers of mathematics are helping pupils to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills well. This is particularly the case in key stage 3. As a result, pupils are making good progress in mathematics and are confident to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects such as science.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in English are effective. This is supporting pupils to make good progress. Opportunities to write at length in other subjects, such as history and geography, support the development of pupils' literacy skills well. Pupils are articulate and speak with confidence in a variety of situations.
- The school promotes reading in key stage 3 English lessons and through enrichment activities well. An effective support programme helps those pupils who join in Year 7 with reading skills below those expected for their age to catch up with their peers. Inspectors heard pupils reading with confidence, fluency and good understanding of the texts that they were reading.
- Most teachers plan activities that are well matched to pupils' abilities. However, some teachers do not provide sufficient challenge to the most able pupils or consistently encourage them to aim for the highest standards.
- Staffing and recruitment difficulties mean that some teachers have to teach subjects other than their specialism. Some of these teachers do not have the depth of knowledge or skills needed to help pupils make consistently good progress. For example, they do not use challenging questioning, or detailed guidance that helps pupils to deepen their understanding. This is particularly the case in science.

## Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There is a culture of respect in the school. Pupils have opportunities to debate and learn about moral and social issues in discrete lessons and through planned opportunities in other lessons. They are confident to give their opinions and listen respectfully to the ideas of others.
- Leaders have developed a programme that aims to develop resilience and independence, build confidence and support pupils' well-being. Inspectors noted that pupils are confident and self-assured in lessons, around the school and in discussions, reflecting the positive impact of this programme.
- All pupils study religious education to GCSE level. This promotes pupils' understanding of the beliefs and culture of others. The school's core value of tolerance is evident in the school. Pupils told inspectors that there are very few incidents of derogatory, racist or homophobic language.
- Pupils have careers education and guidance from Year 7 and opportunities for work experience in Year 11 and the sixth form. Leaders ensure that pupils receive clear guidance to support them in making decisions about future options at the end of each key stage and are aware of the expectations of employers. As a result, there are very few pupils who are not in education, training or employment when they leave the school.
- Pupils know whom to approach if they need support, and are confident that staff will ensure that they get the help that they need. The overwhelming majority of responses on Parent View indicated that parents feel that their children are safe, happy and well cared for at the school.
- Pupils have opportunities to take on a number of leadership roles, such as those of house captain, sports leader and anti-bullying ambassador. They also develop an understanding of democracy through social and moral lessons and opportunities to participate in debates.
- Leaders carry out appropriate checks on the welfare of the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision. This includes daily checks on pupils' attendance and regular monitoring of the progress that they are making.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is a calm and orderly environment. Pupils socialise sensibly at lunchtime and breaktime and there are good relationships between pupils and with adults.
- Leaders have worked hard to address the issues raised at the last inspection. Pupils arrive promptly for lessons and properly equipped, so little learning time is lost. Behaviour in lessons is good. Pupils reported that there is low-level disruption, but that this is rare. Inspectors' observations and scrutiny of school records support this view.

- Occurrences of serious behaviour incidents are rare. The lower than average use of fixed-term exclusions and the school's own records of internal sanctions reflect this.
- Leaders' expectations regarding attendance are clear. The structures and systems in place, including the clearly defined role of the form tutor in monitoring attendance, have resulted in significant improvements in attendance. Absence rates and the proportions of pupils who are persistently absent are lower than the national average and are reducing further.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils make good progress across most subjects in all key stages. Consequently, they are prepared well for the next steps of their education, training or employment.
- Pupils' progress in English from entry at the end of key stage 2 until the end of key stage 4 has been above the national average for the past two years. This is because pupils experience teaching in the subject that is typically good and have opportunities to apply their writing skills in other subject areas. Pupils in both key stages told inspectors that teachers consistently challenge them to do their best and improve the quality of their work in English lessons.
- In 2016 and 2017, pupils' progress in mathematics was in line with the national average. Current pupils are making good progress and are developing the key skills of problem solving and reasoning. They are able to apply their knowledge and understanding of mathematics in different contexts.
- Progress measures for 2017 dipped in key stage 4 when compared with those for 2016. This was in part due to the performance of a group of pupils who have complex needs, who followed an alternative curriculum. Leaders have ensured that the small number of current pupils accessing alternative provision have the opportunity to complete GCSE or equivalent courses where appropriate.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those with an education, health and care plan, typically make good progress on the courses they study. Leaders ensure that pupils have access to appropriate support and follow courses that meet their needs and aspirations. Teachers plan activities to ensure that pupils can succeed in lessons, and additional adults provide effective support for individuals. Leaders use additional funding wisely.
- Pupils have made below-average progress in modern foreign languages in the past. A change to the languages offered in key stages 3 and 4 has improved pupils' progress and the numbers of pupils opting to study a language at GCSE are increasing. Inspectors' observations and scrutiny of work indicate that current pupils are working enthusiastically and making good progress in French and Spanish.
- Pupils have made below-average progress in science over a number of years. This has been due to turbulence in staffing. Inspection evidence indicates that rates of progress are increasing. Where pupils are taught by established teachers, they make consistently good progress. Progress is less consistent where teachers are not specialists in science. Leaders have recognised this and are using established teachers to accelerate the progress of key stage 4 pupils who have had weaker teaching in the past. However, some non-specialist teachers need further support to be able to help

pupils make better progress.

- Progress for disadvantaged pupils has been below average and they have attained standards below those of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. Leaders have put in place challenging targets for disadvantaged pupils in order to raise achievement. Observations, work scrutiny and the school's assessment information indicate that progress for this group is improving and that differences in attainment are reducing, particularly in key stage 3.
- The most able pupils have not made the progress they should in some subject areas. Leaders have recognised this and have made providing greater challenge for this group in order to increase rates of progress a clear priority in the school's improvement plan. There is evidence that this is having a positive impact on improving pupils' rates of progress, but the level of challenge is not consistently high from all teachers.

### 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Leadership of the sixth form is effective. The head of sixth form has accurately identified areas for improvement and put in place actions to address these. Regular checking ensures that there is an accurate view as to whether actions are making the required difference and plans are changed if necessary.
- Students have the opportunity to follow a variety of A-level and vocational courses that are matched to their abilities and interests. Approximately one third of students complete study programmes consisting of a mixture of A-level and vocational courses. Typically, students successfully complete these courses. Many move on to higher education and increasing numbers are embarking upon apprenticeships. The proportion of students who are not in education, employment or training at the end of their studies is lower than the national average.
- Students experience a variety of activities that support their personal development and welfare. These include guidance regarding future study, careers information, and opportunities for work experience. Students were positive about the support that they receive in discussions with inspectors and in their responses to the online questionnaire. Students receive guidance regarding staying safe and maintaining their well-being, although some expressed that they would like further guidance on maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is good. Students arrive promptly to lessons and attend regularly. They generally arrive well prepared for lessons and their well-organised folders show that they have developed good study skills that support learning.
- Students typically make progress that is at least in line with the national average in both academic and vocational courses. The progress made by A-level students fell below that made by students nationally in 2017. Leaders rightly identified that this was due to students and teachers not adapting to the demands of new specifications. They have ensured that teachers have accessed the support available from awarding bodies and have worked with other schools to ensure that assessment is accurate. Inspection evidence indicates that current students are making good progress in a range of subjects.
- Systems for tracking students' progress are good. Teachers identify students at risk of



falling below their ambitious targets and put in place support to help them catch up. As a result, most students are making good progress.

- There is good support for those students who did not attain a standard pass in GCSE English or mathematics when in Year 11. These students make above-average progress compared with similar students nationally and improve their grades.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good across the range of courses provided. Teachers match activities to the abilities of students and provide insightful, detailed guidance on how to improve. Occasionally, they could provide even greater challenge to students to increase their rates of progress further.

## School details

Unique reference number	137377
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10044759

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of students in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	975
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Madeleine Jackson
Headteacher	Andy Christoforou
Telephone number	01487 812352
Website	<a href="http://www.abbeycollege.cambs.sch.uk">www.abbeycollege.cambs.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:andy.christoforou@abbeycollege.cambs.sch.uk">andy.christoforou@abbeycollege.cambs.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	23–24 February 2016

## Information about this school

- Abbey College, Ramsey is an average-sized secondary school located in a rural area of Cambridgeshire.
- The school opened as an academy converter in September 2011.
- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through pupil premium funding is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is lower than the national

average. However, the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above the national average.

- The school has received support from the Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (CMAT), the local authority and an external consultant.
- The school uses alternative provision provided by Huntingdon Regional College, Peterborough Alternative Curriculum Education Centre (ACE) and Academy 21 for a very small number of pupils.
- The school met the government's floor standards for pupils in Year 11 in 2017.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school. Almost all of these observations took place with members of the senior leadership team.
- An inspector also listened to a small group of Year 7 pupils reading, observed two assemblies, and visited an intervention session for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and the chief executive and executive leader for special educational needs from CMAT.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the self-evaluation summary, the school's improvement plan, minutes of meetings of the governing body, safeguarding records, school assessment information, attendance and behaviour records, and school policies and procedures.
- Formal discussions were held with groups of pupils from each key stage to discuss their experiences of school. Inspectors also spoke to pupils in lessons and at break- and lunchtimes. Inspectors also took account of the 37 responses from the online pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work across different key stages.
- Inspectors analysed the 484 responses from Ofsted's online survey of parents, Parent View, including the free-text commentary provided by 269 parents. Inspectors also considered two emails from parents received during the inspection.
- Inspectors also considered the 61 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. Formal and informal discussions took place with staff members to gather their views about the work of the school.

## Inspection team

Paul Wilson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul O'Shea	Ofsted Inspector
Rob James	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Webb	Ofsted Inspector

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