

Hartsdown Academy

George V Avenue, Margate, Kent CT9 5RE

Inspection dates

8–9 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils have yet to make the rapid progress needed to overcome previous considerable underachievement and weak teaching in all subjects.
- In the last three years, GCSE results have been in the bottom 10% of results nationally.
- Teaching is not effective in science. The quality of teaching in some other subjects is also too variable.
- Sixth-form teachers and students have not fully assimilated the new, well-chosen, International Baccalaureate (IB) career curriculum.
- Some members of the school community, including parents and carers and staff, have been unsettled by the pace of change at the school.
- Below-average attendance and inconsiderate behaviour by some pupils interrupt learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is transforming the school, having been in post for two years. He continues to steer its future path in the right direction with resolute energy and determination.
- The competent senior leadership team, practically all subject leaders, and the majority of staff are fully behind the headteacher. They work hard to support his changes and the high standards he has set.
- Senior leaders receive valuable practical support and advice from the local governing board and from the executive headteacher and trustees of the Coastal Academies Trust.
- Pupils' reading is improving rapidly as they now have regular, intensive practice sessions.
- Academic and pastoral staff work tirelessly to ensure the welfare of all pupils and students. They provide outstanding care for children looked after, pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language, and pupils who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.
- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are making increasingly good progress, having only experienced the school under its new good leadership. Progress overall is improving from a very low base.
- Many staff have welcomed training and the opportunity to work with other schools. The quality of teaching and learning is far better than it was two years ago.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in science by ensuring that:
 - teachers take account of pupils' starting points, especially in Years 7 to 9
 - teachers plan lessons and tasks which enable pupils to make consistently good progress and sustain their focus in class
 - teachers deal more promptly with any misbehaviour so that learning is not interrupted.
- Improve outcomes, by:
 - continuing leaders' good work to improve pupils' progress
 - ensuring that a higher proportion of pupils achieve their full potential at the end of key stage 4.
- Strengthen leadership and management, by:
 - continuing leaders' and governors' work to develop and communicate a shared vision for improving the school, harnessing the support of staff, parents and the community
 - fully embedding the recent new initiatives and improvements including the new sixth-form curriculum
 - continuing the school's good work to improve attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- From his first day of term in September 2016 the headteacher did not shy away from describing the school as it was. To pupils, staff and parents he laid bare its major educational weaknesses. These included well-below-average progress in all years, weak teaching, and GCSE results in the bottom 10% of all schools, along with poor attendance and behaviour. The headteacher has taken effective action to turn the school around. However, some parents and staff have found some of the changes he has made unpalatable and unsettling.
- In 18 months, the headteacher's resilience and determination have begun to transform the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' behaviour. Attendance and punctuality have also improved. The curriculum, particularly in the sixth form, is being transformed to accompany the strong focus on high aspirations for all.
- A randomly chosen group of Year 11 pupils made perceptive comments about the headteacher. These included, 'It's obvious he's doing his best to make the school better.' These pupils knew how well they were doing and their determination to attain GCSE pass grades in both English and mathematics was convincing.
- Hartsdown pupils have very low attainment on entry and a very high percentage of them are disadvantaged pupils. The headteacher has a demonstrable commitment to ensuring that all pupils, irrespective of their backgrounds, achieve as well as they can. He has the full support of the trust and its executive headteacher.
- Underpinning the headteacher's drive to turn around the school is a loyal and hard-working senior leadership team whose members now know exactly what they are responsible for. Some are new to their roles but all enthusiastically promote the school's values of 'scholarship, teamwork, resilience, integrity, vision and excellence'.
- Teaching has improved. The majority of subject leaders and teachers are enthusiastic, and have welcomed training which has developed their teaching skills. Senior leaders correctly gauge that teaching and progress are still not good enough in science and within a few other subjects. They identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching accurately.
- It is clear that the trust's executive headteacher and trustees are supporting Hartsdown with much encouragement and practical advice. The trust and other local secondary and primary schools now liaise regularly to confirm standards and progress by assessing work together. They visit each other's classes and mutually benefit from this flourishing network. Staff have particularly worked on making pupils' education and pastoral transition to secondary school successful.
- Key stage 4 pupils study fewer vocational qualifications as these courses were unsuccessful. The amount of time for English and mathematics lessons has wisely been increased. More pupils are now taking GCSE courses than in the past. In September 2018, pupils in Year 7 will start to follow the IB middle years curriculum, which particularly links learning to the real world.
- The school does a good job to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain, particularly in citizenship lessons, form time and assemblies. Teachers in other subjects such as

geography and history also contribute by discussing, for example, issues in less developed countries, or the roots of democracy.

- Senior leaders take some steps to keep in touch with parents. They provide some information in the languages which some families speak at home. Parents are encouraged to attend meetings with the headteacher. Nevertheless, the very small number of responses and comments written by parents are very mixed. While some parents praise the headteacher's good work, others have less confidence in the leadership of the school. Pupils' responses were equally mixed.
- Discussions with middle leaders, examination of pupils' books, and visits to many classrooms during the inspection paint a positive picture. This fully supports senior leaders' view that subject leadership is improving and that more pupils are now learning well.

Governance of the school

- Members of the school board of governors are 100% behind the headteacher. The chair, who is also a director of the trust, and the vice-chair, rightly believe that the headteacher's firm stance on discipline and attendance has underpinned the school's rapid improvement. Board members bring considerable wisdom and relevant experience, in finance, education and personnel, to their deliberations. They know very well how much further the school has to go to be valued and appreciated by the entire school community.
- The chair of the board meets the headteacher every week to discuss progress and, when necessary, to provide support. Board members encourage the developing liaison with other local schools, particularly for sharing teaching skills and making the primary to secondary transfer successful.
- Governors are attentive to safeguarding and fully aware of its importance for pupils' safety at school and in their lives outside school. They are knowledgeable and fully alert to the issues and potential stresses within the local area and community. They are determined to keep the school's finances on an even keel. They meticulously check that all additional funding, for disadvantaged pupils, those eligible for catch-up support, and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, is spent wisely. All disadvantaged pupils' learning and pastoral needs have been re-evaluated, and support then matched to them individually. This did not happen in the past.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher was instrumental in establishing a local safeguarding forum, enabling schools to share information about pupils at risk. Leaders are very knowledgeable about the potential risks to pupils. They work closely with other local schools to confront and resolve any issues related to safeguarding in the community. Safeguarding training for staff is particularly important, and a full day is spent on this at the start of each academic year, with many updates and other sessions at regular intervals.
- Safeguarding staff have effective links with many organisations that provide high-quality support for vulnerable pupils and those on the child protection register.

Expertise has also been brought in house to be sure that vulnerable pupils are cared for as well as possible.

- Case studies examined during the inspection confirmed the school's attention to detail and perseverance in supporting pupils at risk. The work to prevent pupils from being lured into local gangs has been particularly effective. The school has an above-average number of children looked after, some of whom have complex needs, and gives all of them much care and attention to be sure they feel safe and secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Despite moving into a higher gear in recent months, teaching requires improvement. In some classes pupils do not learn well enough, particularly in science. Occasionally, pupils cannot tackle work because their reading is too poor and/or teachers do not appreciate their limited vocabulary. Not all teachers take enough account of pupils' prior learning and set work which is sometimes too easy or too difficult. On occasions, teachers do not explain things well to pupils and as a result, pupils are unclear about their tasks.
- Most teachers ensure that pupils remain firmly focused on their learning. Behaviour has improved and pupils appreciate the work their teachers do for them. Interruptions to learning, such as through background chatter or lack of attention, are usually nipped in the bud by the majority of teachers following the school's strict behaviour policy. Nevertheless, a few pupils felt there should be 'zero tolerance' of any low-level chatter and wanted all teachers to be equally firm.
- Improved punctuality in the morning and to lessons has contributed to most lessons starting on time. Pupils said that they no longer waste time doing 'word searches' and that they enjoy the short 'do now' starters which help them to focus. They also like the new, smart exercise books they write their notes in and the useful information, such as the periodic table and glossaries, printed in the back.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those in the hearing impaired unit, are supported well and make steady progress. The Year 7 nurture group for pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans is a valuable resource for those pupils who find mainstream classes difficult.
- Arrangements to improve pupils' reading are now in place. This includes the increasingly effective, intensive, reading sessions which some pupils attend regularly. These are delivered by well-trained teachers and teaching assistants using carefully selected resources, and progress is monitored closely. More teachers now make sure that pupils have the opportunity to write at length.
- The current Year 11 pupils say that their teachers have helped them to feel well prepared for their GCSEs and other qualifications. They have appreciated the opportunity to practise questions in lessons, including full papers under examination conditions.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. It has always been a strong part of the school's work and continues to be essential to support pupils and respond to issues within the local community. The school's safeguarding arrangements support pupils' welfare and personal development very well.
- Pupils refer to the decrease in bullying incidents, saying that there is always someone they can go to if they have a concern or are upset. Pastoral leaders use a variety of successful strategies when working with pupils who have particular concerns or issues.
- Pastoral leaders have arranged funding so that primary pupils receiving Place2Be support (the children's mental health charity) will continue to receive this when they move to Hartsdown. Pupils at risk of not having any post-16 plans follow courses on resilience, self-awareness and life skills in Years 10 and/or 11. Should a pupil's chosen route not work out, the school welcomes them back until something more suitable can be arranged.
- Leaders work hard to make sure that pupils acquire social skills. The prefect system, for example, gives pupils the chance to be interviewed and have formal meetings with adults. The head boy, head girl and some prefects recently met the local Member of Parliament and gained much confidence from this experience. A pupil is chosen to be the 'ambassador' in every lesson, greeting any visitor, typically a senior leader dropping in, and telling them what the lesson is about. Inspectors much appreciated being welcomed into lessons with a handshake and an explanation.
- Pupils' personal development is the main focus in personal, social and health education and citizenship lessons. Topics, such as physical and mental health and well-being, mindfulness, drugs, e-safety or road safety are tackled clearly. Daily form time, outside speakers and religious education lessons, for example, also contribute to pupils' understanding and awareness of different spiritual, moral, social and cultural behaviours and ways of life.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. On occasions, pupils' behaviour can interrupt learning and therefore reduce their progress. Pupils' behaviour around the school is also variable. For example, pupils can be boisterous and loud at times, especially at the end of the school day. However, during the inspection there was no evidence of aggression between pupils.
- Staff regularly analyse any behaviour issues recorded by teachers, including any behaviour which results in a fixed-term exclusion. They identify the reasons for inappropriate behaviour, consider the different groups or individuals involved and respond to what they find. They therefore have a good understanding of where behaviour needs the greatest improvement. Pupils are adamant that behaviour has improved but know that it is not yet good enough.

- Attendance is improving slowly but has a long way to go. The week before the inspection, only 40 pupils had 100% attendance and nearly 200 missed at least one day. Tight monitoring of lateness has improved attendance in lessons. The welfare team's persistence has been most successful in improving attendance of children who are looked after and those who have an EHC plan.
- Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and one of them commented that this contributed to her feeling 'a sense of belonging' when she joined the school. Most pupils spoken with during the inspection were accepting of different lifestyles and said that racist incidents are extremely rare.
- The off-site alternative provision, taught by highly trained Hartsdown staff, is clearly improving the life chances of the 30 or so pupils attending it on a part- or full-time basis. It gives them a calm and orderly environment where, particularly for those at risk of permanent exclusion, they can reflect on and improve their attitudes to study. Team teaching and practical courses, such as construction or motor vehicle maintenance, suit these pupils but other career aspirations are encouraged. Staff make sure that pupils' post-16 futures are secure before they leave.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2017, only 15% of all pupils attained a pass (grade 4) in English and mathematics. Pupils' progress was well below the national average. There are many entwined reasons behind these very low GCSE results. The previous poor teaching, an unsuitable curriculum and other factors such as pupils' low attendance contributed to this.
- Pupils' standards on entry to Hartsdown are well below the national average. When the present Year 7 pupils arrived, the great majority of them had reading ages below those typical for their age, and poor skills in mathematics. A very high proportion of pupils are vulnerable and/or disadvantaged. An above-average number of them leave and enter the school after Year 7. All these factors inhibit progress and, in the past, have had a negative impact on the school's GCSE results.
- In recent years the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased to at least one-third of Year 11 in 2017. Often, these pupils do not speak English on arrival or have not experienced formal education. With very low starting points and poor attendance, these pupils' progress is well below that of other pupils.
- In the past, disadvantaged pupils' progress has been even lower than that of other pupils. However, in Year 9 especially, pupils are making better progress and the differences between disadvantaged and other pupils are diminishing. The most recent assessments of pupils' progress and work seen during the inspection indicate a slow but steady improvement. Overall, boys make slower progress than girls and the small number of the most able pupils do not always make progress which reflects their starting points.
- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are making increasingly good progress from their starting points. These pupils have only attended Hartsdown while the current headteacher has been in post. Their attendance is the best in the school. Year 11 pupils have also realised that they need to work hard to achieve GCSE pass grades, particularly in English and mathematics. Their attendance at school, including for extra revision

sessions, reflects their positive attitudes.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- There were few students in the sixth form during the inspection. It is in state of flux while the curriculum is changing. In 2017, only a handful of students took A levels. About 40 students completed work-related courses at various levels, mainly in health and social care, sports studies and music. They had made close to average progress.
- The sixth form's football academy was discontinued as it was not being delivered at a good standard. At the same time, more students chose to study work-related courses at college. The decision was made to introduce the IB careers programme from September 2017. This is designed for: 'students who wish to engage in career-related learning while gaining transferable and lifelong skills in applied knowledge, critical thinking, communication, and cross-cultural engagement'.
- All the 2017 Year 13 students moved on to education, employment or training, having received helpful and practical careers advice. The small number of current Year 13 students have nearly completed their work-related courses in media studies, music, health and social care, and childcare. They have been guided well, and over half of them have applied to go to university.
- Current Year 12 students are pleased with the careers advice they receive and enjoy the new IB curriculum. Currently they are studying diploma courses in English and psychology, a mathematics qualification and work-related options. At a later stage, students will be involved in setting up a project that benefits the local area.
- During the inspection there were few Year 13 lessons, and most Year 12 students were involved in a two-day first aid course. Consideration of the quality of teaching was not possible. An experienced deputy headteacher, steering the sixth form well through its new path, was confident that progress and the quality of teaching are improving but not yet securely good in all subjects.
- Pupils resitting GCSE English and/or mathematics have improved their grades at least as well as other students nationally. School leaders have made sure these students attend regular, timetabled, lessons.

School details

Unique reference number	136571
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10040727

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	747
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	32
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Chris Argent
Headteacher	Matthew Tate
Telephone number	01843 227957
Website	http://hartsdown.org/
Email address	info@hartsdown.org
Date of previous inspection	20–21 March 2014

Information about this school

- The school, which had been a stand-alone academy since 2011, joined the Coastal Academies Trust in December 2014. The trust includes a local grammar school, a local primary school and another non-selective school in Westgate-on-Sea.
- An above-average proportion of pupils have SEN and/or disabilities, including a small number who attend a unit for hearing impaired pupils.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above that seen nationally.
- Each year around 60 pupils, roughly half of Year 7, are eligible for catch-up funding, which is for pupils who did not attain the expected standards in either English and/or

mathematics at the end of primary school.

- The number of children looked after is much higher than that seen in most secondary schools. Some of these pupils are far from their home area.
- The majority of pupils and students are White British, with at least 10% of other White European backgrounds and 10% East European Roma pupils. There are very small numbers of pupils from a wide range of other ethnic minority backgrounds. About one third of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who enter or leave the school during Years 7 to 11 is well above that seen nationally.
- The school did not meet the 2017 government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on Key Stage 4 academic performance in the three year period 2015 to 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in over 40 lessons. Most of the visits took place jointly with senior leaders. Only a small number of Year 11 lessons could be sampled as some pupils were sitting mock GCSE examinations.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books in lessons and separately considered samples of their work in English and mathematics.
- Inspectors met pupils and students informally and held meetings with randomly selected groups of pupils from several year groups. They also met with a few of the most able pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities, and children looked after.
- The lead inspector met the trust's executive headteacher, the vice-chair of the local board of governors and the chair of the local board who is also a trust director.
- Inspectors took into account responses to Ofsted's questionnaires from 74 staff, 52 pupils and 40 parents, several of whom wrote additional comments.

Inspection team

Clare Gillies, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Gerard Strong	Ofsted Inspector
Jason Hughes	Ofsted Inspector
Harry Ingham	Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018