

John Cabot Academy

Woodside Road, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 8BD

Inspection dates

27–28 November 2018

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

- This is a rapidly improving school. Leaders and teachers are working effectively together to improve all the key aspects of school life.
- The executive principal and senior leaders are ambitious for the school. They have put good plans in place to achieve their goals. As a result, there have been notable improvements in behaviour and standards.
- GCSE standards rose substantially in 2018. Pupils made progress at least as good as pupils in other schools in almost every subject, and significantly better in mathematics.
- Pupils in every year group are now making good progress. This is because teachers have high expectations of them. Across all years and most subjects, teachers encourage pupils to think hard and solve complicated problems.
- Standards of literacy across the school are good. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to write extended answers to questions. They are taught to structure their answers appropriately. Standards of punctuation, spelling and grammar are good. This is because teachers in almost all subjects continually focus on these aspects.
- Pupils are keen to improve their work. They get precise advice from teachers and they act on it. They make strong progress as a result.
- Behaviour in lessons is good. Teachers can focus on teaching and pupils can concentrate on learning.
- Pupils treat each other well. They are lively and friendly. Relationships between pupils and teachers are warm and respectful. However, some boys are boisterous as they move around the school site.
- The sixth form is a strength of the school. It successfully caters for a large number of students with a range of abilities and from diverse backgrounds. Leaders and teachers ensure that students are well supported, make good progress and go on to positive education or training destinations.
- Leaders have had some difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers in some subjects. This has slowed the rate of improvement in the quality of teaching.
- Some weaker teaching remains. Where teaching is weaker, pupils are not challenged to stretch themselves. They become disengaged and a minority begin to misbehave.
- School leaders do not always communicate well enough with parents. As a result, a significant number of parents feel that their concerns are not addressed.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment, and hence raise standards, by ensuring that all teachers have equally high expectations of all pupils.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that communication with parents is good and that parents feel their concerns are addressed.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- School leaders are ambitious. They lead the school with a single-minded determination to improve the quality of education on offer to pupils. The executive principal is committed to improving the life chances of pupils. She has galvanised leaders and teachers. Working together, they are improving the school rapidly.
- Senior leaders are experienced and knowledgeable. They have an accurate and detailed understanding of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. As a result, they are able to successfully plan and implement improvements. They regularly evaluate their innovations to see if they can be improved further. This approach has led to steady improvements in standards, behaviour and attendance.
- Senior leaders are successfully leading improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They monitor the quality of teaching closely and act to improve it where necessary. Leaders ask teachers to focus on the specific aspects of teaching that they believe will yield rapid improvements. They have provided good training opportunities to support teachers and monitored the impact on pupils' progress. They have put a great emphasis on ensuring that all teachers are consistent. This approach is at the heart of the higher standards now evident across the school.
- Senior leaders are investing heavily in improving the quality of leadership across the whole school, including the sixth form. Middle leaders are held accountable for the quality of work in their areas of responsibility and are supported to achieve the level of success expected. Middle leaders feel that the balance of challenge and support is helping them to make a strong contribution to improving the school. New senior leaders are also supported to develop and extend their skills.
- Leaders and teachers have worked hard to improve behaviour. They have set high expectations of behaviour in classrooms and provided training to support teachers in securing it. Pupils comment that they can focus on their work now because the atmosphere in classrooms is orderly and focused on learning.
- There has been a significant turnover of staff since the previous inspection. Leaders have put considerable effort into ensuring that they recruit new staff well. While they have protected pupils from the worst of the staffing turbulence, some areas have been affected. The progress that pupils make in science has been slowed because of staffing difficulties.
- Leaders make sure the curriculum is appropriate for all pupils. Pupils have good opportunities to study a broad range of subjects throughout key stages 3 and 4 and into the sixth form. Leaders are keen to ensure that this is supplemented by a strong mix of artistic and cultural experiences. They have introduced an enrichment programme into the weekly timetable for key stage 3 which gives every pupil the opportunity to try out new experiences, whether it be working on community projects or learning a hobby.
- There is an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' personal and social skills through a well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. The PSHE programme also helps pupils to consider and discuss the values that underpin

living in Britain today. This programme is supplemented by a good range of opportunities to discuss moral and social issues when they occur in other parts of the curriculum. For example, discussing racism while studying rap music.

- The multi-academy trust to which the school belongs has developed and implemented a key stage 3 curriculum across its schools. This is helping teachers to raise their expectations of pupils.
- Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a comprehensive and well-planned programme of careers education and independent advice and guidance. This is having a significant effect in raising pupils' aspirations. Every student who left Year 13 in 2018 went on to a positive higher education or training destination.
- Leaders use the additional funding available to support disadvantaged pupils well. As a result of their work, these pupils have improved their attendance and behaviour. They are now making progress that is broadly in line with other pupils in other schools.
- Leaders know that the Year 7 catch up funding was not used effectively last year. There is a new plan in place, but its effectiveness has not yet been robustly evaluated.
- Leaders ensure that the funding available to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is used effectively. These pupils are receiving the support they need to allow them to make good progress from their starting points.
- A significant number of parents feel that school leaders and teachers do not respond to their concerns promptly. They feel their complaints are not always treated seriously. Parents' views of the school are significantly more negative than those of their children.

Governance of the school

- Trustees monitor the school's effectiveness closely. There is a well-established process of scrutiny in place across the trust. This holds senior leaders and the academy council (local governing body) to account effectively. Trustees are experienced and well trained. As a result of the scrutiny process, the multi-academy trust executive leadership team has been able to ensure that appropriate support for leaders and teachers has been put in place and is having an impact.
- The academy council is increasingly effective. The council has been strengthened by the appointment of experienced governors. This has enhanced the council's ability to ask relevant and searching questions in challenging leaders and holding them to account.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders make sure that keeping pupils safe is given the highest priority. There is a well-established culture of vigilance that extends across the main school and into the sixth form. Teachers and non-teaching staff are well trained and know what to do should a pupil report a concern to them.
- Leaders and staff know the significant number of vulnerable pupils well. They work with external agencies, such as the local authority social care team, to provide the

support these pupils need so that they can attend school and thrive.

- Leaders ensure that the school's safeguarding systems and records are well maintained. They make sure that all the necessary checks are carried out on adults before they are allowed to work with pupils. There are appropriate risk assessments in place where necessary.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers typically have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. In key stage 3, pupils are given a curriculum that builds closely on their knowledge from primary school. In key stage 4, pupils are set targets that challenge them to stretch themselves for their GCSEs. Sixth-form students benefit from being taught by skilled subject specialists who know them well and set appropriate tasks and challenges.
- Teachers are successful in encouraging pupils to stretch themselves. They are skilled in asking questions that probe pupils' understanding and encourage them to think deeply and not accept the first answer that comes to mind. This is helping pupils to build their ability to answer complicated questions and structure their answers.
- Teachers plan effectively to meet the needs of the broad range of abilities of pupils in their classes. In Year 11 history, for example, pupils of all abilities were asked to consider the issues that faced Elizabeth I when she came to power. Pupils responded at a level that is appropriately stretching for them because of the history team's skilful planning.
- Pupils are making good progress because teachers assess their knowledge and understanding accurately and give them precise advice on the next steps in their learning. Pupils respond to this positively. They take the feedback seriously and make a genuine attempt to improve their work. In English, this is proving particularly effective in developing pupils' ability to structure extended essays.
- Teachers focus closely on pupils' basic literacy. As a result of their persistence, pupils' writing skills are well developed. Lower- and average-attaining pupils write clearly, with accurate punctuation and spelling. The most able can structure their ideas in extended pieces with a rich vocabulary and with few errors.
- Some teaching is weaker. Typically, this happens when teachers do not accurately meet the needs of pupils and do not challenge them sufficiently. Pupils then lose interest and produce work of a lower calibre than that of which they are capable. A significant proportion of weaker teaching is the result of staffing turbulence and school leaders' difficulties in recruiting permanent staff.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics is consistently strong. Typically, the teaching is challenging, forcing pupils to think hard. Pupils are asked to attempt complicated problems and consider questions that build on what they know, and then take them a little further. As a result of this carefully planned work, pupils make significantly better progress than pupils in other schools.
- Pupils with SEND are well supported. They are given the support they need in classes to enable them to make good progress from their starting points. The SEND team monitor progress closely and intervene appropriately where necessary.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is good.
- Most pupils have good attitudes to learning. They want to succeed, and they know that being positive in lessons and responding to teachers' advice and support is the best way to do that.
- Students in the sixth form have very positive attitudes. They are keen to learn, they take heed of the advice teachers give them to improve their work and respond well to mentoring.
- Pupils are increasingly proud of their school. They recognise that the school is improving and believe it is helping them to realise their ambitions.
- There is a good range of pastoral support for pupils across the school. Pupils are confident that they are cared for and they know there is someone they can go to if they need help. Leaders ensure that there is good provision for those pupils who are anxious or who need support for their mental health.
- Pupils can involve themselves in a wide range of enrichment opportunities that form part of the school timetable. Pupils can develop their artistic and sporting skills, take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme or work on a community project for the benefit of others.
- Pupils are taught to be respectful of everyone, regardless of their sexuality or ethnic group. The diverse nature of the school is celebrated by leaders and pupils.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through assemblies and PSHE lessons. They understand how to keep themselves safe online.
- A small number of pupils who struggle to succeed in a mainstream school attend alternative provision. Liaison between school staff and the providers is good. This helps to ensure that these pupils can thrive in an environment that meets their needs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. The school's behaviour policy is consistently applied by the great majority of staff. As a result, pupils are confident that their learning is unlikely to be disrupted by poor behaviour. The number of instances of seriously poor behaviour that result in the temporary exclusion of a pupil has declined significantly over the last two years.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school site at breaks and lunchtimes is generally good. Most pupils move around the corridors sensibly and socialise with each other in a mature manner. However, a small number of boys are too boisterous and are sometimes not as well behaved out of lessons as they are in lessons.
- Some parents believe that behaviour in the school is uniformly poor. Pupils have a generally more positive view. They believe that although the school used to have a

poor reputation for behaviour, this is no longer deserved.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make similar progress overall to their peers in other schools. In the 2018 GCSE examinations, pupils achieved at least as well as those in other schools. This is a significant improvement on 2017, when they made less progress than the national average. Pupils who attend the school now are maintaining these improved standards across most subjects and are making better progress in some.
- The most-able pupils are making good progress. In the past they underachieved, but this is no longer the case. Teachers now set high expectations and pupils are responding. They can solve complex mathematical problems and write extended essays in, for example, English and history. They set out their answers in a structured and thoughtful way.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils nationally. This substantial improvement on previous years is possible because their attendance has improved and the support they receive has also become more effective.
- Pupils with SEND are making good progress from their starting points. This is the result of teachers ensuring that the work they set matches each pupil's ability and the additional support pupils receive.
- Half of all pupils achieved a good pass in both English and mathematics in 2018. The equivalent figure nationally was 40%. Standards in English are higher than average. More than four out of five pupils attained a standard pass in 2018. Standards remain good for those currently in the school. Mathematics is also a strength. Pupils made significantly more progress than pupils in other schools last year and pupils in the school now are building on that success.
- Relatively few pupils take the range of subjects that constitute the English Baccalaureate qualification. However, those that do are achieving a level of success that exceeds that of pupils in other schools.
- The standard of literacy is good. Generally, pupils' basic spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate and they can express themselves well.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Students studying A levels make broadly similar progress to students in other sixth forms. Over the last few years, results have slowly improved, although in 2018 they remained broadly static. Disadvantaged students made good progress and pupils who speak English as an additional language also achieved well.
- Students studying applied subjects achieved a little less well in 2018 than in the previous year. Leaders and teachers have acted quickly to address this and students currently studying in school are making appropriate progress.
- Those students who retake GCSE English and mathematics make strong progress in English and similar progress to students in other schools in mathematics.
- Students are making good progress because the quality of teaching is consistently well

matched to their needs. Students are also well supported by teachers through a well-organised academic mentoring system. Students value this level of individual attention. Teachers are quick to provide additional help when they see students struggling to keep up with their studies.

- Leaders have ensured that the programme of study includes appropriate opportunities for work experience and PSHE. The quality of careers advice and guidance is good and highly valued by students.
- The quality of leadership of the sixth form is strong and effective in meeting the needs of a broad range of students' differing needs. Leaders have a clear vision of ensuring that all students can be successful, regardless of ability or circumstance. They have implemented a curriculum and support programme that ensure that many students, including those that are vulnerable or have additional barriers to success, can achieve their goals. In 2018, every student achieved a university place or an apprenticeship, or equivalent high-quality employment with a training opportunity.

School details

Unique reference number	135295
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10048256

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	1,147
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	348
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Jane Harrington
Headteacher	Sally Apps
Telephone number	0117 9763000
Website	http://www.cabot.ac.uk/
Email address	sally.apps@clf.cabot.ac.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 June 2016

Information about this school

- The school is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium grant is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well above average.
- The school is a member of the Cabot Learning Federation (CLF) multi-academy trust. The sixth form serves seven of the Bristol-based secondary schools in the CLF.

Students are based in John Cabot Academy and Bristol Brunel Academy.

- Eleven pupils attend alternative provision. Some attend CLF Engage or City of Bristol College and others attend hospital education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the range of subjects and age groups and scrutinised a wide range of pupils’ written work. Some of the observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including minutes of academy council and trust meetings, development plans, analysis of pupils’ progress, attendance and behaviour data. They also considered safeguarding documents and the school’s review of its own performance.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and groups of pupils.
- An inspector spoke with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the chair of the board of trustees and the chair of the academy council.
- Inspectors took account of 117 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with a parent in person. They also took into account the responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Andrew Lovett, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
David New	Ofsted Inspector
Jen Edwards	Ofsted Inspector
Will Morgan	Ofsted Inspector
Carol Hannaford	Ofsted Inspector

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