

Causeway School

Larkspur Drive, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN23 8EJ

Inspection dates

26–27 February 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- A legacy of weak teaching has meant that pupils do not make enough progress, particularly in English and mathematics. Learning and assessment have been too variable, resulting in mediocre outcomes.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school. Some teachers have low expectations of pupils.
- Teaching does not consistently challenge pupils. As a result, pupils, and particularly most-able pupils, do not reach the high standards of which they are capable.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving. Nevertheless, in the past, these pupils have not made consistently strong progress.
- Attendance is below the national average and too many pupils are persistently absent. However, strategies to improve attendance have been strengthened, with support from Swale Academy Trust (SAT). Consequently, attendance is improving.
- Not enough pupils in key stage 4 have had the opportunity to study a wide range of academic subjects because of narrow curriculum choices in the past.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has improved standards since starting in January 2017. She is ably supported by her leadership team. Leaders and staff share her ambitious vision for pupils.
- SAT has provided effective support over the past two years. This has included leadership expertise at senior- and middle-leader levels.
- In key stage 3, the curriculum has been reviewed and strengthened so that pupils study a broader and more balanced range of subjects.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and during social times.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive because of strong relationships between staff and pupils.
- The interim executive board members use their considerable expertise to challenge and support leaders.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe and well cared for because pastoral support is strong.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve outcomes for all pupils, and particularly disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, so that all pupils make strong progress over time by ensuring that:
 - teachers' expectations of all groups of pupils are high enough
 - work set is appropriately challenging
 - the effective practices evident in some parts of the school are extended more widely.
- Continue to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence so that they are at least in line with national averages, especially for disadvantaged pupils.
- Continue to strengthen the curriculum, particularly in key stage 4, so that pupils have opportunities to study a broad range of academic qualifications.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since joining the school in January 2017, the headteacher has tackled the school's significant challenges with determination and an insistence on high standards. Consequently, many areas of the school have improved over the past two years. Most notably, leadership has strengthened significantly so that teaching, learning and assessment, and pupils' progress, although not yet good, are improving.
- The school has undergone a period of significant turbulence. Last year, a large proportion of teachers left the school. Despite this, leaders have successfully recruited staff. New staff were inducted thoroughly and quickly. Teachers now follow the school's newly strengthened teaching policies.
- Support from Swale Academy Trust (SAT) has been extensive. The trust has provided expertise in leadership, particularly in the form of the seconded headteacher and deputy headteacher. SAT has also supported subject leaders by providing 'executive' subject leads from other schools who mentor and train subject leaders.
- Leaders have a clear and accurate view of their school. They understand the school's weaknesses and have formulated purposeful plans for improvement. Priorities for improvement are communicated well to staff so that they understand the areas within the school that require the most focus. For example, all teachers understand the need to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make better progress.
- Leaders have been successful in improving the school's assessment systems so that they have an increasingly clear view of current pupils' progress. Notably, the accuracy of teachers' assessments has improved. SAT organises moderation and assessment events across the trust's schools. These have afforded staff the opportunity to work with colleagues from other schools so that they can compare their own assessments of pupils' levels with those from other schools. This has been particularly helpful for teachers who teach the new GCSE specifications.
- Extra funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent increasingly effectively. A well-planned provision is in place that ensures that disadvantaged pupils benefit from a range of academic and pastoral interventions. However, these plans are relatively new and not yet fully embedded.
- Leadership of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has improved so that plans for pupils' support are more closely matched to pupils' needs. The school's SEND base, named 'The Key', provides an area where bespoke support is offered to vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEND. Pupils told inspectors that this support has helped them to overcome barriers to learning.
- Pupils have a developing understanding of fundamental British values. There are several opportunities in school to become involved in democratic processes and pupils understand why democracy is important. For example, pupils vote for the head girl and head boy after candidates have given speeches to pupils in assemblies.
- Staff morale is high. Overwhelmingly, staff feel well supported by leaders. Staff believe that leaders support them in managing pupils' behaviour. Almost all staff who responded to Ofsted's confidential questionnaire agreed that leaders take workload into

account when setting school policy.

- Recent changes to the curriculum in key stage 3 mean that pupils can choose to study appropriately challenging courses in key stage 4. However, the legacy of narrow curriculum choices in the past is still evident in key stage 4 as not enough pupils have had the opportunity to study a wide range of academic subjects. For example, only small proportions of pupils study languages. Nevertheless, this is an improving picture and leaders recognise the need for long-term change and effective curriculum planning.

Governance of the school

- In October 2016, the local governing body was disbanded and an interim executive board (IEB) was set up by the local authority. Members of the IEB share a high level of expertise. They know the school well and understand how to support leaders in making further improvements.
- Members have a clear and accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have steered the school through a period of turmoil and overseen a school improvement plan that allows them to closely monitor the impact of leaders' actions.
- Records of the IEB meetings show that members challenge leaders very well. They offer support when necessary and probe leaders' assertions astutely. Members recognise the urgency with which improvement is needed in some areas of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Checks on the suitability of staff are rigorous. Leaders and members of the IEB monitor these checks closely.
- Staff are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are safe. They are well trained and have up-to-date knowledge of government guidance. They understand the local issues that affect pupils and work well with external agencies to ensure that pupils are well informed about issues such as 'county lines'.
- Induction processes ensure that staff new to the school are immediately trained on safeguarding issues. The high expectations of leaders are communicated to new staff through clear policies. Staff new to the school told inspectors that this training is high quality.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving, it is not yet strong enough. Weaker teaching in the past means that pupils, particularly in key stage 4, have gaps in their knowledge and understanding, particularly in English and mathematics. In several subject areas, teaching does not always ensure that pupils consistently fill these gaps.
- Across subjects, teaching is variable. In English, mathematics and science there is strong teaching characterised by precise questioning, well-planned activities and high expectations. Nevertheless, in the same departments there is weaker teaching,

particularly in key stage 4, because teachers' expectations of pupils are too low. Teachers do not consistently identify the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils need in order to make strong progress. In lessons, tasks do not always challenge pupils, particularly the most able, so that they can reach the high levels of which they are capable.

- Overall, pupils have positive attitudes in lessons. They recognise that teaching has improved over the past year and appreciate the fact that there is more stability in the teaching body. Teachers' absence has reduced markedly over the past year, so that there is less reliance on supply teachers. Pupils told inspectors that this had improved the quality of teaching.
- The school's assessment policy is increasingly well embedded so that pupils understand how to improve and have opportunities to reflect on their work and deepen their thinking. This includes re-drafting written work so that previous errors can be rectified.
- Pupils take pride in their work. Teachers have worked hard to ensure that the school's recently revised presentation policy is in place in lessons. As a result, pupils present their work well. This ensures that they can use their class workbooks to review what they have previously learned in lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe in school and well supported by pastoral staff.
- Pupils are confident learners. They readily take opportunities in lessons to contribute to activities.
- Pupils exhibit a sense of pride in their school. They wear their uniform smartly and are welcoming to visitors. They talk honestly about the challenges the school has faced in the past and believe that the school has improved over the past two years.
- The school's ethos is clearly communicated in displays. Pupils understand what the school stands for and they can explain the meaning of the five school values: community, challenge, craftsmanship, character and courtesy.
- Pupils receive regular and impartial careers information and guidance in lessons, assemblies and during tutor time. This helps prepare them for the next stage of their education.
- A small proportion of pupils who have behavioural or emotional needs attend alternative provision centres for all or part of their timetable. Courses are matched to their individual needs. Leaders regularly visit these centres so that they can monitor how well pupils are doing. They receive weekly updates on these pupils and intervene quickly when pupils do not attend or are facing personal difficulties. As a result, pupils in the alternative provision centres are well cared for by Causeway staff and by staff in those centres.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. They respond quickly to teachers' instructions. This means that lessons are orderly and purposeful.
- At social times, pupils socialise sensibly with each other or play sports in the school grounds. Duty staff supervise pupils well and ensure that social times are harmonious.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying is uncommon. If it does happen, pupils are confident that staff respond quickly and effectively.
- Attendance is below the national average for secondary schools. However, attendance has improved significantly over the past year because of improved attendance strategies. Similarly, rates of persistent absence are high but declining steadily. Leaders monitor attendance closely and use increasingly effective ways to involve parents.
- The proportion of pupils who receive fixed-term exclusions is declining. Leaders have ensured that behaviour incidents are dealt with quickly using a coordinated approach between school leaders. For example, leaders meet daily in 'behaviour panels' to discuss behaviour incidents and decide together on appropriate support or sanctions for pupils whose behaviour is concerning.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Current pupils' progress and attainment have improved because of increasingly effective teaching and strong leadership at senior- and middle-leader levels. However, the legacy of weak teaching and poor assessment procedures means that too many pupils, and particularly key stage 4 pupils, have considerable gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects. As a result, outcomes overall require improvement.
- In 2018, pupils' progress was below the national average in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Pupils leaving the school in 2018 attained, on average, half a grade less than pupils from similar starting points nationally.
- Disadvantaged pupils made weak progress in 2017 and 2018, particularly in English and mathematics. Over time, poor teaching and ineffective use of extra funding meant that they were unable to catch up with others from similar starting points nationally. However, extra funding for disadvantaged pupils is now being spent more effectively. Plans for this spending have been improved and leaders have ensured that all staff provide increasingly effective support for these pupils. As a result, their progress is improving, particularly in key stage 3.
- Pupils with SEND who were in Year 11 last year made slow progress. However, the leadership of SEND provision is improving. As a result, pupils with SEND across the school are now making stronger progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Pupils in key stage 3 read more confidently than those in key stage 4. In key stage 3, pupils who enter the school with low reading ages benefit from reading strategies put in place using Year 7 catch-up funding. In Key stage 4, however, the school's literacy strategy has fewer positive results. Pupils, and particularly pupils with low prior attainment, do not have enough opportunities to develop a more sophisticated

vocabulary.

- Pupils who attend alternative provision are making increasingly strong progress so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

School details

Unique reference number	131669
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10053223

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	525
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Penny Gaunt
Headteacher	Liza Leung
Telephone number	01323 465700
Website	www.causewayschool.org
Email address	office@causewayschool.org
Date of previous inspection	22 September 2016

Information about this school

- Causeway School is a below-average-sized secondary school.
- The school has been supported by Swale Academy Trust since November 2016. The trust has seconded school leaders, including the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, to the school. The trust has worked closely with school leaders to provide strategic direction and operational support in order to improve the school.
- An interim executive board (IEB) was established in October 2016 by the local authority. This board is responsible for the governance of the school.
- Many pupils are of White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is above the national average for secondary schools.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average for secondary schools.

- A declining proportion of pupils attend alternative provider centres. These include East Sussex College.
- Since the last inspection, the local authority became aware that the school's attendance and exclusion information, provided by leaders prior to 2017, was inaccurate. As a result, the attendance and exclusion systems have been overhauled and this information is now accurate.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons across key stages 3 and 4. In several observations, senior leaders joined inspectors.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, the headteacher, a trust representative, a local authority representative and the chair of the IEB.
- Inspectors formally met with groups of pupils from key stages 3 and 4. Inspectors also spoke to a wide range of pupils during social times and during lessons.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff from meetings with groups of staff and from the 24 staff who responded to the confidential questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered the views of 12 parents who responded to the confidential Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View.
- Documentation was scrutinised by inspectors, including the school's plans for improvement, its self-evaluation, reports on attendance and behaviour, records relating to pupils' safety, minutes of IEB meetings and information on pupils' outcomes.

Inspection team

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