

Inspection of a good school: The Howard School

Derwent Way, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent ME8 0BX

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 November 2021

Outcome

The Howard School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school and feel valued. The school is inclusive with a real sense of community. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff, are a real strength. The school is committed to make a positive difference to the lives of young people. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported to perform as well as their peers.

Pupils are rightly proud of the school's status as a gold 'Rights Respecting School'. They willingly accept people from different backgrounds and circumstances. Pupils feel safe. They say that bullying is rare because staff are quick to intervene. Staff help pupils to resolve any problems they may face. Sixth-form students actively support younger pupils. They look after them and read with them at lunchtimes.

Pupils are enthusiastically involved in a wide range of subject events and whole-school competitions. The house championship competition actively supports the school's 'LORIC' values of leadership, organisation, resilience, intuition and communication.

Leaders and staff do everything they can to help pupils to do well. The school provides a full programme of careers advice, including apprenticeships. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, governors and trustees share a united vision to ensure that all pupils receive a good-quality education. Leaders articulate confidently how the curriculum has been developed. Subject leaders have clearly outlined what they want pupils to learn, and in what order. Teachers work together to discuss and develop resources to enrich the curriculum.

Subject leaders ensure that the curriculum is effectively structured and ordered. Starting points in lessons reflect what pupils already know or have learned during the pandemic.

Leaders' plans provide teachers with detailed curriculum journeys for each year group and schemes of work for each subject. The sixth-form curriculum is similarly comprehensive and challenging.

Some elements of the key stage 4 curriculum are covered in Year 9. Leaders make sure that pupils learn the required content of the key stage 3 curriculum in Years 7 and 8. The curriculum remains ambitious for pupils as they move through the school. However, pupils can drop languages at the end of Year 8, and many do. Leaders are working hard to make the subject more appealing with newly appointed staff and trips to France and Spain. Links with partner primary schools are also being developed to promote languages.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum for each subject is carefully planned to ensure that new knowledge builds upon pupils' prior learning. Teachers consistently adhere to subject leaders' curriculum plans. Pupils take pride in their work and progress well. Effective support for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND ensures that they achieve in line with their peers.

Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to provide clear explanations and help identify common errors and misconceptions. They use assessment well to establish what pupils know and can remember. This allows them to focus their lessons on appropriate next steps for the pupils.

Teachers work hard to break down barriers and encourage boys to read. Recently introduced texts on bullying and disability allow attitudes to be explored. Literacy is supported across all subjects. Subject reading lists offer a wealth of recommended books.

The culture, development and well-being (CDW) programme covers careers, welfare and personal development, as well as relationships and sex education. The aims are clear, but the course is relatively new and not yet fully embedded. The school accepts that CDW is an area for further ongoing development. This is especially the case in the sixth form.

Assemblies and tutor time are used well to develop pupils' social skills and cultural awareness. British values are celebrated. The school is very inclusive. Leaders make good use of alternative provision to provide bespoke curriculum pathways for some pupils who require them.

Pupils are polite and welcoming. Their good behaviour in lessons actively supports their learning. A small number of parents expressed concerns over bullying, but this was not confirmed by the inspection findings. Pupils say that some bullying does occur, but it is dealt with quickly and effectively.

The sixth form provides a successful learning environment. Students achieve good results, and many go on to study their chosen courses at top universities. Students joining the school in the sixth form say they are helpfully inducted into the school. Girls in the sixth form appreciate the wide choice of subjects and the extensive support and advice received.

Leaders have creatively sought to reduce staff workload by implementing reduced assessment and providing additional time on Fridays for standardisation, marking and moderation. Early career teachers and new staff say that they feel well supported.

Governors have a clear understanding of the school's priorities and have undertaken training to better understand their roles and responsibilities. They ensure that statutory requirements are met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The single central record meets all requirements. Safer recruitment procedures are rigorously followed. Safeguarding is highlighted in recruitment adverts and checked during interviews. All staff receive annual training and regular updates.

The designated safeguarding lead is clear that, in terms of safeguarding, 'it could happen here'. Members of the safeguarding team are well trained and well qualified. They confidently challenge the local authority when necessary to ensure timely and appropriate support is given to vulnerable pupils.

Pupils are confident about the support available to help them to be safe and healthy. Safety, welfare and well-being are promoted through the CDW programme as well as assemblies and tutorials.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The programme for CDW is not yet fully embedded. The intent is clear, but the complexity of the programme is still being addressed. As a result, the quality of delivery is variable. Leaders need to develop and refine the programme, and provide further training for staff so that they can confidently teach the content.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school to be good in November 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	141466
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10200146
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1487
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	237
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Dan McDonald
Headteacher	Cathy Reid (executive headteacher), Jasbinder Johal (headteacher)
Website	thehoward-that.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 October 2016

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Howard Academy Trust (THAT). The school has achieved a gold 'Rights Respecting Schools' award from Unicef.
- Two pupils attend alternative provision at two registered education providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- During this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, geography, physical education and modern foreign languages. This involved meeting with leaders of subjects, visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking to pupils and staff.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, headteacher and other staff. They reviewed documentation and actions taken to safeguard pupils and promote their health, safety, welfare and well-being.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum documents, school policies and the single central record. The lead inspector met with governors, trustees and early career teachers as well as staff who were new to the school.
- Inspectors considered 126 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and a further 84 written responses from parents. Inspectors reviewed the survey responses from 62 members of staff and 101 pupils. The school provided additional feedback from their own parent and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Roessler	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Bzikot	Ofsted Inspector

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