

# Inspection of Cranbrook School

Waterloo Road, Cranbrook, Kent TN17 3JD

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Inspection dates: 22 and 23 March 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Good**

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The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Sixth-form provision

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected six years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Cranbrook School is full of kindness, integrity, curiosity, aspiration and individuality. This is a school steeped in history, tradition and is full of character. Pupils feel part of the close-knit community. They say that there is always someone they can talk to if they are worried about something.

Pupil leadership is at the heart of the school. The pupil leadership group, known as the 'senior four', impressively model the school's values. Other pupils look up to them and follow in their footsteps. The 'senior four' eloquently lead assemblies about important, sensitive issues, including equalities. They are actively involved in leading change. Pupils love the diversity of the school. They feel that everyone is treated equally and, if they see or hear something that is not right, they challenge it.

Developing pupils' character and encouraging individuality are important. An array of clubs, societies, trips and events means that pupils develop their individual talents and interests.

Pupils are highly motivated to do well. They have a thirst for learning and show mutual respect. The high expectations staff have for pupils lead to excellent behaviour in lessons and at social times. A feeling of calm and purposefulness pervades the school.

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

The new headteacher, an Old Cranbrookian himself, has begun to win the hearts and minds of staff, parents and pupils. He took up his post during the COVID-19 pandemic and has quickly developed positive relationships with the school community. His proactive approach means that he has got to know the school's strengths and areas of priority quickly. As a result, many parents, staff and pupils say that they are excited about the changes they are seeing and the future ahead.

Governors support leaders and staff very well. Coupled with this is the challenge they provide. This ensures that leaders are constantly encouraged to look at how they can improve things further for pupils. Governors have a clear vision for the school and carry out their roles well.

The English Baccalaureate is at the heart of the curriculum and prepares pupils well for life beyond Cranbrook. Ambition for all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), is woven into the fabric of the school. Leaders have carefully thought about what it is they want pupils to learn and when in each subject from Years 7 to 13. However, they know that there has been less of a focus on how well the curriculum is planned and sequenced in some of the subjects. This means that some subjects are further ahead in the development of their curriculum than others.

Reading and its importance is understood at Cranbrook. Leaders know that pupils need to be able to read if they are to get the most from the curriculum. Pupils are avid readers because of the enthusiasm staff have for reading. A wide range of books that span many genres help pupils to develop a love of reading. Support for those who struggle with reading ensures that all pupils learn to read fluently and confidently. This means that pupils have the tools they need to learn well in class.

Teachers, including those who teach sixth-form students, are experts and have good subject knowledge. They are clear in their explanations in lessons. Pupils get involved and happily answer questions and discuss their thinking. Training about different teaching approaches has helped to ensure more consistency across the school. For example, training provided by the school's very knowledgeable special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) about how to support pupils with SEND helps to ensure that they make good progress in lessons. Regular checks on pupils' learning helps teachers to support pupils so that they make as much progress as possible.

The school's personal, social and health education programme is well thought out. Leaders have carefully considered the topics and issues pupils need to learn about in each year group. The programme is extensive and encourages pupils to become well-rounded, responsible individuals who have an active part in society.

Pupils develop independence, resilience and curiosity during their time at school. They are prepared well for their future lives. Many Old Cranbrookians that attend the school's sixth form move on to study at Russell Group universities, including Oxbridge. Pupils benefit from the careers guidance and support they receive.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know pupils well and are alert to the risks pupils face. Training provided to staff means that they know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil. Leaders take the right actions to ensure that pupils and their families get the support they need. Leaders work well with other partner agencies. They carry out checks on adults working at the school. They record these checks on the school's single central record. However, some checks had not been carried out at the time of this inspection. These checks were swiftly completed and recorded on the single central record during the inspection.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Staff who administer the school's single central record do not fully carry out the checks they should on adults working at the school. This means that gaps were found in the single central record during the inspection. Leaders need to ensure

that staff who administer it receive updated, appropriate training and carry out all the checks required.

- The school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently well planned and sequenced in some subjects. This leads to variation in how well the curriculum is delivered in these subjects. However, it is clear from leaders' actions that they are in the process of bringing this about. Leaders need to ensure that every subject is coherently planned and sequenced. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.
- A small percentage of sixth-form students have poor attendance. This means that these students do not benefit well enough from the curriculum that is planned for them. Leaders need to ensure that the attendance of these students rapidly improves.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137739
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10211976
<b>Type of school</b>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	878
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	304
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	William Young
<b>Headteacher</b>	Will Chuter
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.cranbrookschool.co.uk/">www.cranbrookschool.co.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	28 and 29 April 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Cranbrook School is a selective grammar school with boarding provision from Year 9 onwards.
- The school has lowered its age range since the last inspection.
- The school is a single academy in the Cranbrook School Academy Trust.
- The headteacher took up his post in January 2021.
- The school ensures that a range of education and training providers speak to pupils from Years 8 to 13 so that they find out about the different options available to them. As a result, the school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause.
- The school uses two registered alternative education providers.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: modern foreign languages, English, mathematics, geography, physics and performing arts. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons in some other subjects, including art, biology and food and nutrition.
- Inspectors met with leaders, staff, pupils and those with responsibility for governance, including the chair and vice chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors held discussions with one registered alternative provision education provider.
- Inspectors visited the sixth-form provision and spoke to a group of sixth-form students, as well as the head of the sixth form. They visited sixth-form lessons.
- Inspectors observed tutor time, assembly and break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised behaviour and bullying records.
- Inspectors scrutinised governing body meeting minutes and a review of safeguarding which had been carried out by the local authority.
- Inspectors met with the SENCo to discuss the provision for pupils with SEND. They visited lessons to look at the support these pupils were receiving.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and comments made by those who responded.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors looked at the school's website and policies, met with leaders and spoke with pupils and staff. They scrutinised school records of the safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school, and spoke with governors. They scrutinised a selection of electronic child protection records.

## Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Zoe Harris	Her Majesty's Inspector
Cathy Reid	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Baker	Ofsted Inspector

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