

Inspection of Dover Christ Church Academy

Melbourne Avenue, Whitfield, Dover, Kent CT16 2EG

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff know their pupils and local community well. Pupils know that adults care about them. As a result, the vast majority of pupils feel safe at school and know that they have an adult to speak to if they have any concerns. Most pupils do not think that bullying is a problem at their school, but if it does occur, they are confident that it is dealt with effectively by leaders.

Many pupils know what leaders' expectations are of how to behave appropriately at school during lessons and at social times. However, behaviour that is below leaders' expectations is not yet addressed consistently and effectively across the school. This means that some learning is disrupted in lessons and there are too many instances of inappropriate behaviour during social times.

While there is a clear ambition for many subjects, in too many cases the teaching of the curriculum day-to-day does not yet meet leaders' expectations.

There are a range of opportunities for pupils to develop independence and leadership skills, including being part of an on-site restaurant called 'Le Hatch'. There are further specific opportunities woven through the curriculum to provide enriching experiences to all pupils. This includes the recent addition of a 'character education' programme and 'ethics' lessons for pupils in key stage 3.

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

Leaders share a determination to provide all pupils with a broad and ambitious curriculum, but this is not yet fully realised. In English, challenging texts offer appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural capital. Leaders have carefully considered the vocabulary that they want to teach and when, to support pupils with these challenging texts. However, in other subjects, the curriculum offer is not ambitious enough. For example, in physical education (PE) there are significant gaps in the content that pupils are taught. This limits pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject. Furthermore, a significant minority of pupils in key stage 3 are not able to study a language. Consequently, this limits their opportunity to study for a key stage 4 qualification. Students in the sixth form receive a stronger quality of education. The curriculum is broad and ambitious, with a varied academic and vocational offer.

Leaders are acutely aware of the local context. At the heart of their actions is a clear intention to provide an education that is fully inclusive, irrespective of individual starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported to access the curriculum and achieve well. The specialist resource provision provides an appropriate balance of bespoke support and inclusion within the school. As a result, pupils feel happy, safe and ambitious for their future. Furthermore, weaker readers are clearly identified. They benefit from well-considered support which improves the fluency and accuracy of their reading.

In addition, leaders have recently implemented approaches, including the 'STAR' framework, to improve the quality of teaching across the school. However, their high ambitions are not yet translating into pupils' secure learning across the curriculum. In particular, there is inconsistency across subjects of staff checking regularly what pupils know and remember before introducing more complex content. As a result, some pupils struggle to recall important knowledge that they need to access future learning. Teachers in the sixth form demonstrate secure subject knowledge. This enables them to deliver the curriculum well, checking understanding carefully before moving students on.

Leaders have also developed plans for what pupils will learn in personal, social, health and economic education. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic means that pupils have gaps in their learning. Leaders have plans in place to provide a range of opportunities for pupils to be taught this missing content. Within their plans, leaders have clearly and carefully considered access to careers information, including apprenticeships and vocational routes. Pupils also benefit from a range of opportunities that help to prepare them for their future lives. They are provided with varied extra-curricular opportunities, although leaders do not yet have clear oversight of attendance and impacts of these opportunities.

Many pupils and some parents share concerns about behaviour. Leaders have not yet communicated their expectations for behaviour effectively across the school. As a result, there is an inconsistent approach to managing inappropriate behaviour. This also includes punctuality to lessons, which leaders are keen to improve. During social times in particular, the behaviour of some pupils is disrespectful. Behaviour is better in some lessons but there is low-level disruption that interrupts learning. Most pupils want to succeed and feel well supported to do so. This is especially clear in the sixth form, where learning is rarely disrupted. Across key stage 5, pupils engage in high-quality discussions and debate. There have been improvements in attendance, in particular in the sixth form and for pupils with SEND.

Trustees and senior leaders work closely together. They have a shared understanding of the school's priorities. However, they have not yet been successful in making sure that the high expectations they desire within the school are reinforced consistently.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff receive regular and effective training in safeguarding. Staff know the pupils and families that they serve well. They also understand the important role that they play in a whole-school culture for safeguarding. As a result, they respond quickly and appropriately to any concerns raised. Leaders take effective action in response to any concerns reported. They work well with external agencies as required to support pupils, as well as referring concerns when appropriate.

Pupils are taught important knowledge about how to stay safe, including age-appropriate information about healthy relationships. They are confident to raise concerns with staff, and trust that these will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some curriculum leaders have made effective changes to their curriculum, including careful consideration of what should be taught and in what order. However, the teaching of the intended curriculum is variable across subjects. This means that some pupils have misconceptions and gaps in knowledge which are not addressed before they are moved on to more complex content. Leaders must ensure that what all pupils know and can do is checked prior to teaching new content, and that the information teachers gather is used effectively to adapt subsequent teaching.
- There is an inconsistent application of the school's behaviour management policy. This means that some pupils have their learning disrupted in some lessons. It also means that during social times, there are too many episodes of behaviours that fall short of leaders' expectations. Leaders must ensure that all staff share high expectations and follow clearly outlined and agreed processes to manage behaviour consistently.
- Leaders have identified priorities to improve the school. However, they are not yet strategically and systematically responding to the information that is available to them. This means that leaders' assertions, actions and planned next steps are not always reliably evidenced. Leaders must use information to precisely monitor the impact of their actions to reduce the variability of quality of education and behaviour and attitudes across the school.

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.

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	136175
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10241512
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	852
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	95
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Pam Jones OBE
Principal	Jamie MacLean
Website	www.dccacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is sponsored by Canterbury Christ Church University, a single academy trust.
- There have been two additions to the senior leadership of the school since the last monitoring visit in June 2021.
- The school has a specialist resource provision for pupils with a range of SEND. Currently, 62 pupils are supported within the provision.
- The school currently uses one alternative provider.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.

- 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 education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, French and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the subject leader, observed pupils at work, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. An inspector also met with the subject leader for humanities and design technology, and visited some lessons.
- Inspectors met with the principal, vice principals and other leaders, including leaders of the specialist resource provision. The lead inspector also met with the chair of the trustees. Further trustees were involved in other inspection activities.
- The inspection team reviewed a wide range of information provided by the school, including information about behaviour and attendance, minutes of trustees' meetings, and relevant school policies. Inspectors also reviewed leaders' own evaluation about the effectiveness of the school and their plans for further improvement.
- Inspectors talked to a wide range of pupils and observed their behaviour in lessons and during social times.
- Inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by looking at relevant documentation, staff recruitment checks and training records. The inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils to gather their views. They considered 55 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 38 free-text comments. Inspectors also took account of 71 responses to the staff survey and 178 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Hanna Miller, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Owen McColgan	Ofsted Inspector
Carl McCarthy	His Majesty's Inspector
Francois Walker	Ofsted Inspector

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