

Inspection of a good school: Cornwallis Academy

Hubbards Lane, Linton, Maidstone, Kent ME17 4HX

Inspection dates: 11 to 12 January 2023

Outcome

Cornwallis Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe. They embrace the Cornwallis 'SMILE' ethos with its aim to motivate, inspire, excite and engage all pupils to be successful. Relationships are supportive, and pupils say that teachers are kind and helpful. A strong sense of community permeates the whole school.

Leaders have extremely high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils' conduct around the school and in classrooms is calm and orderly. Pupils confirm that behaviour is dealt with fairly and consistently. They show respect and tolerance for one another. Year 11 prefects support younger pupils with their reading. Sixth-form students run an anti-bullying club (ABC) offering a safe space for pupils to talk.

The school's personal development provision actively supports pupils' welfare and well-being. High aspirations are encouraged through a well-established careers programme. Sixth-form students get help with university applications. They benefit from visiting speakers and university links. As a result, increasing numbers proceed to further and higher education.

The school offers an extensive range of enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities. A large number of pupils are enrolled on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Pupils appreciate opportunities to broaden their outlook through trips, scholarships, community-focused initiatives and charitable events.

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

The curriculum is well planned, carefully considered and precisely sequenced. The curriculum is ambitious. Content is suitably linked to the national curriculum and associated examination syllabuses. The sixth-form curriculum is well matched to students' aspirations and ambitions. Students appreciate the variety and breadth of the subjects on offer.

Pupils value their academic work, as well as the support for their personal development, welfare and well-being. The curriculum is well considered to ensure that pupils master content and learn more and remember more. Teachers ensure that topics are revisited through starter and retrieval activities.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. However, leaders recognise that currently, too few pupils take a modern foreign language. This seriously limits the proportion of pupils gaining the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). Leaders are already focused on raising the status of the subject and ensuring that pupils are aware of the benefits of taking languages.

A small number of subjects have suffered from staffing shortages. In these subjects, curriculum implementation has not been so secure, and the impact has been lessened. As a result, pupil progress is not as high as it could be. Leaders are working relentlessly to improve progress across all subjects with improvements seen in a number of subjects observed during the inspection.

Reading is well supported, and barriers to reading are understood and effectively tackled. Gaps are addressed through reading interventions. Reading for pleasure is actively promoted. Leaders are continuing to embed reading strategies across the breadth of the curriculum.

Assessment is used effectively with regular reviews and evaluations. This ensures that understanding is checked and gaps in learning are closed. Cross-curricular opportunities are still being identified and highlighted. In some subjects, such as mathematics and science, these links are better developed.

All pupils experience a well-considered programme of personal, social and health education. However, there is room for much broader coverage of age-appropriate topics in the sixth form. Inclusion is well supported, safeguarding is highlighted and pupils know what to do if they have any concerns.

Staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively because pupils' needs are identified clearly. Those in receipt of pupil premium are actively encouraged to achieve well. The growing number of higher performing pupils are well supported to broaden and deepen their knowledge.

Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. They present information clearly and logically. Teachers make sure that there is a positive atmosphere in classes. This allows pupils to focus on their learning, answer questions, justify their thinking and use appropriate subject-specific language. Low-level disruption is rare. There is a strong work ethic. Pupils are confident, courteous and polite.

Leaders at all levels talk with enthusiasm and pride about the school. They are well supported by governors and trustees who have established a culture of trust, challenge and encouragement. Staff speak favourably of the support they receive, the teamwork that exists and the sensitive workload management. They are happy and proud to work at the school.

The leadership of the headteacher is particularly strong and, with the support of her capable senior leaders, she has been instrumental in the development of the school's strong community ethos. One member of staff wrote, 'All staff feel valued and respected. We have such a supportive staff body and a leadership team who always make time for staff.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a strong and secure culture of safeguarding. It is successful in keeping staff updated on the latest safeguarding practices. Pupils and students are well known and well supported. The school is caring, and the community culture ensures that all members look after one other. Senior leaders have all received safer recruitment training.

The single central record is well kept. It is suitably detailed with all requirements carefully checked. The safeguarding policy is robust and detailed. The designated safeguarding lead has an excellent understanding of her role and responsibilities. The school is tenacious in resolving safeguarding issues.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The uptake of modern foreign languages is not high enough. As a result, the number of pupils taking the full EBacc is below government expectations. Leaders should continue their efforts to increase the uptake of languages, raise the profile of the subject and ensure that the EBacc is at the heart of the curriculum in line with the Department for Education's ambition.
- The quality of education is not yet securely and consistently embedded across all subjects. Further work is needed to ensure that the implementation of the curriculum in all subjects is secure. Leaders should continue to ensure that the very best practice which already exists is shared across all subjects.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2017.

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	135371
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256496
Type of school	Secondary (non-selective)
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,343
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	339
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Marilyn Hodges
Headteacher	Samantha McMahon
Website	www.cornwallisacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	28 to 29 November 2017

Information about this school

- Cornwallis Academy is a larger-than-average-size 11 to 19 non-selective school in a selective area. It is part of the Future Schools Trust.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in English, mathematics, history and art. For each

deep dive, inspectors spoke to subject leaders about the curriculum, visited a selection of lessons, talked with subject teachers, spoke to pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, staff, students and pupils. They examined the single central record, read safeguarding documentation and reviewed the school's practices and procedures.
- Inspectors considered the policies provided by the school and the trust. They studied curriculum documentation, suspension statistics, behaviour logs, attendance records and destination information. The lead inspector met with governors and trustees, as well as the chief executive of the Future Schools Trust.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey of parents' views and further written comments provided by them. They reviewed the responses to the online surveys completed by staff and by pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mary McKeeman	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Boddington	Ofsted Inspector

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