

Inspection of The Charles Dickens School

Broadstairs Road, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 2RL

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The school prides itself on being supportive, innovative and inclusive. Pupils are happy and safe. The personal, social, health and education (PSHE) programme complements pupils' academic studies and contributes to their individual development.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are suitably assisted to access the full curriculum. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is closely monitored and sensitively supported. Leaders have thought carefully about how to help pupils to know and remember more.

Behaviour and attitudes are very positive. A strong work ethic pervades. Pupils are focused on their lessons. They listen attentively to the teacher and one another. Relationships are harmonious, kind and supportive.

The school provides many memorable opportunities, including visits to Chatham Dock Yards and the Imperial War Museum. Pupils value these opportunities, as well as their roles and responsibilities. These include head students, school prefects and sports captains, as well as anti-bullying ambassadors.

Careers provision is strong. The school has good links with schools and colleges to support all curriculum pathways, including apprenticeships. Increasing numbers of pupils are pursuing level 3 qualifications.

Leaders promote an inclusive environment by teaching pupils about protected characteristics. The school has an extensive extra-curricular offer. This includes hospitality, well-being and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, as well as clubs for Latin, sports, young enterprise and creative writing.

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

The curriculum is ambitious and well planned. It is suitably sequenced across all years. It is hierarchical and developmental. Content is carefully matched to the national curriculum. Pupil progress is in line with national averages. Achievement in mathematics and science are improving fast.

The school operates a three-year curriculum in key stage 4. Leaders say this is to maximise time on options and ensure pupils are suitably equipped for external examinations. The key stage 3 content is fully covered, although the school acknowledges shortfalls in design and technology which are being addressed.

The proportion of pupils taking the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is too low. The uptake of languages is not high enough. The school is focused on raising the status of the subject, as well as ensuring that pupils choose languages as an option. The school appreciates the urgency of this.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, and pupils say that they are always happy to help. Lesson planning ensures that knowledge is revisited with an emphasis on remembering and retaining. Assessment is used effectively with regular reviews and evaluations so that gaps in learning are quickly addressed.

School leaders are focused on developing reading. They use a range of appropriate and well-established approaches. Literacy and reading have been prioritised across subjects. Key terms and knowledge that pupils need to learn are usefully set out. The proportion of pupils whose reading age exceeds their chronological age is increasing.

The school has high expectations for behaviour and conduct. These expectations are commonly understood and consistently applied. Leaders, staff and pupils create a positive environment in which bullying is not tolerated. When bullying does occur, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.

Attendance has improved, but the school is still working hard to reduce persistent absence. Suspensions are high and have increased since the last academic year. The school explains this in terms of raised behavioural expectations. Pupils confirm these high expectations.

The PSHE programme allows pupils to discuss issues around mental health and healthy relationships. The school has an overview of the topics covered, but this is not mapped across the provision to ensure that knowledge is systematically built upon over time.

Trustees and governors are highly ambitious for the school. The trust provides valuable expertise and support. Governors are knowledgeable and encouraging. Leaders value professional development. Staff recognise the heavy workload involved but feel well supported by leaders, with weekly checks on their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured a dedicated culture of safeguarding. Systems and processes are in place to ensure that safeguarding is managed appropriately. There is a strong focus on promoting pupils' welfare and well-being.

Staff and pupils are encouraged to report any concerns they have. Leaders act on reports and keep detailed records of actions taken. Leaders have strong links with external agencies. They carry out checks on adults working at the school.

Pupils feel safe and know how to report safeguarding concerns. The school acts in the best interests of pupils to protect them online and offline. All pupils can identify an adult who they can talk to when they are concerned.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The proportion of pupils taking the EBacc is well below national averages. The uptake of languages is not high enough. Leaders should continue their work to raise the status of languages and ensure that more pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, achieve the EBacc in line with government expectations.
- The PSHE programme is not sufficiently mapped across the provision to ensure that knowledge is systematically built upon over time. The school should map the provision of PSHE across the whole school to ensure that the breadth of content provided is hierarchical, developmental and age appropriate, as well as suitably linked across all subjects.

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	144015
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10257074
Type of school	Secondary (non-selective)
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,114
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Robert Waterson
Headteacher	Warren Smith
Website	www.cds.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 and 26 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Charles Dickens School is an average-size, 11 to 18 years, mixed school, although the school does not currently have any students in the sixth form. The school is part of the Barton Court Academy Trust.
- The school is non-selective in an area of selective education. There are several grammar schools in the local area. As a result, pupils' prior attainment on entry to the school is below the national average.
- This is the second inspection since the school opened as an academy in March 2017. When the school was inspected in June 2019 it was judged to require improvement.
- The school makes use of two registered alternative provisions.
- 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

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 conducted deep dives in English, mathematics, technology, art, history and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke to subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with subject teachers, talked to pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, teachers, pupils and support staff. They spoke to leaders at the alternative provision schools. The lead inspector met with trustees and members of the governing board.
- Inspectors looked at policies provided by the school. They studied curriculum documentation, behaviour logs, attendance records and destination statistics. They looked at the single central record and reviewed safeguarding documentation, practices and procedures.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey of parents' views and other written comments provided at the time. They reviewed the responses to the online surveys completed by staff and by pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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