

Inspection of Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre

Ashford Road, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6LT

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 April 2023

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils receive good support and care at Homewood. Most appreciate the 'culture reset' through which staff have raised expectations of work, behaviour and attitudes. Pupils' behaviour overall is good and they are focused and thoughtful in lessons. Individually, pupils are keen to share how staff help them with their learning or with things that trouble them. The legacy of the impact of a small minority of pupils who are resisting the changes contributes to an initially negative response when pupils are asked about their experiences, but is not representative of the school now.

Pupils benefit from being part of one of the six 'communities' that structure the pastoral support in this large school. Through these, pupils feel known and valued. They know that there is always a member of staff who will make time to support them if needed. This helps them to feel safe.

Throughout the school, and particularly in the sixth form, pupils value the extensive range of courses they are able to follow. The vocational and creative opportunities are wide and support the more traditional options well. Leaders ensure that all pupils have a rich extra-curricular programme, which helps to develop their wider knowledge and skills.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum based on the needs and interests of pupils. This is particularly the case for sixth-form students, who have a wide range of vocational options alongside traditional courses. Leaders have ensured that staff have the strong subject knowledge required to plan and deliver a curriculum that meets the needs of all, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers present information clearly and enthuse pupils in their learning. Most staff use assessment strategies skilfully to identify and address any misconceptions quickly. They are also quick to identify how to best support pupils with SEND. They make appropriate adaptations without fuss, including for sixth-form students. Consequently, most current pupils are achieving well.

Historically, few pupils have continued their studies of a language at GCSE, and so the proportion attaining the English Baccalaureate measure has been lower than the government's national ambition. Leaders have addressed this, and now more pupils are taking a language GCSE than previously.

Leaders promote a love of reading throughout the school. The work to identify pupils who struggle with reading with confidence and fluency is having a positive impact. Specialist staff provide pupils with the support they need to address any gaps in knowledge. Leaders also ensure that all teachers understand what to look for in case other pupils need help with this. Staff increasingly weave specialist vocabulary into everyday lessons. This helps to develop pupils' understanding and precision in their work.

One of the biggest barriers to further raising pupils' attainment is the numbers who are absent from school. Too many pupils are persistently absent and this hinders their learning. Leaders have taken some effective steps to address this, but there remains work to do.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good overall. They are respectful and inclusive in lessons and social time. Leaders have introduced the 'Homewood Habits' of ambition, determination, self-control, collaboration and enthusiasm to help describe the high expectations they have of all at the school. There is a very negative narrative about the school and about pupils' behaviour from a minority of pupils and from some parents and carers who completed Ofsted's Parent View survey. Pupils are very positive about their school when they speak about their own experiences. They are frustrated by a minority of pupils who challenge the high expectations set by leaders. This group currently takes up a disproportionate amount of teachers' time by chatting and being disrespectful. Leaders recognise that they have to address this and ensure that they engage with all stakeholders so that there is a positive working relationship.

The Homewood Habits provide a clear structure which leaders use to ensure that pupils' personal development is promoted well. The range of activities in tutor time, assemblies and enrichment events helps with character education. Pupils, particularly sixth-form students, value the age-appropriate discussions about relationships and navigating the wider world. This is also supported by the extensive careers information, education, advice and guidance that all receive. Leaders are determined that all pupils will go on to the right next steps for them and are very successful with this work.

Leaders have well-considered improvement plans that build on the successes already evident. Governors and trustees support this improvement well through close monitoring and evaluation of actions. They have a keen understanding of their role and ensure that all statutory obligations are met. They consider staff well-being and workload as part of their priorities, and staff recognise and appreciate this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a secure culture of safeguarding. They have ensured that staff are well trained and have detailed knowledge of their responsibilities. Consequently, staff know what to look for and how to act on any worry. Leaders keep a sharp oversight of all concerns, joining them up to create a wider understanding of pupils' possible needs. They work well with families and external agencies, as required. Governors monitor this work carefully.

Pupils are taught how to recognise potential risks and know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of contexts, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Too many pupils miss school too often. This hinders their learning. Leaders should continue their efforts to identify and address barriers to frequent attendance from all pupils.
- A few pupils are reacting poorly to the raised expectations for work and behaviour across the school. These responses have a negative impact on their learning and prevent them from achieving as well as they could. Leaders should continue their work to ensure that all staff support pupils to understand and meet these expectations consistently.
- A minority of parents have a very negative perception of leaders' work to improve the school. This is hampering leaders' work to continue the improvements they have put in place. Leaders need to redouble their efforts to build this relationship so that parents understand what leaders are trying to achieve and the rationale for the actions they are taking.

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	137484
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10268322
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive/Modern (non-selective)
School category	Academy converter
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	2,063
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	350
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Neil Vincer
Principal	Jeremy Single
Website	www.homewood-school.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 September 2019

Information about this school

- There have been changes to staffing and governance since the previous inspection. There is a new chair of trustees and a new chief executive officer (CEO) of the multi-academy trust (MAT).
- There have also been increases to the numbers of pupils in certain year groups as additional pupils have joined Homewood following the closure of a local school.
- The school uses two registered and one unregistered 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 met with the principal and other members of the leadership team. The lead inspector met with trustees of the MAT, the CEO and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, design technology, history, languages 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 considered a range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school, their school improvement plans and minutes from trustee and governors' meetings.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils through formal and informal conversations and taking into account the responses to the online pupil surveys. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and during social time.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents and carers through consideration of their responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- The views of staff were considered through responses to the online staff questionnaire, a telephone call to a specific member of staff and conversations during the inspection.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements in the school by speaking with leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with designated safeguarding leads to discuss the arrangements for safeguarding. During this meeting, the lead inspector scrutinised records and sampled case files to explore how the school identifies and supports pupils at risk of harm. A team inspector examined the school's work to recruit and check on the suitability of staff. Inspectors also checked staff's knowledge about their responsibilities.

Inspection team

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