

Inspection of Skinners' Kent Academy

Sandown Park, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 4PY

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 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	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

The school motto of 'pride in our success' permeates through how pupils conduct themselves around the school. They strive to become well-rounded and respectful members of society. Pupils show kindness and consideration to each other because they want everyone to feel included. A strong pastoral provision in every key stage means that pupils feel well supported and have someone to go to if they need help. Should bullying happen, pupils know that staff will help them resolve issues quickly. Relationships between staff and pupils are nurturing and positive. This means that pupils feel safe and well looked after.

Pupils value the education they receive from the school. This includes students in the sixth form. Leaders have ambitiously built a seven-year curriculum to provide all pupils with the important knowledge they need to excel. Lessons are calm and purposeful because teachers insist on good behaviour. Well-developed school routines mean that pupils know exactly what to expect. Those who find it more difficult to engage with learning receive effective support. Staff in the 'Aspire' and 'EHub' provisions identify and remove barriers to learning. This ensures pupils who need additional help can study successfully alongside their peers.

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

Leaders have built a challenging curriculum to encourage all pupils to become knowledgeable and curious learners. Almost all pupils learn to speak a foreign language. They also study a full set of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. In the sixth form, pupils continue to learn a wide breadth of subjects to help extend their options in further education or employment.

Leaders have carefully identified and sequenced the knowledge that pupils need to learn. Teachers design learning opportunities that have the potential to support pupils in exploring important ideas and skills. For example, in physical education, pupils use videos to breakdown each part of performing a high jump. However, some teachers miss opportunities to study concepts in sufficient detail. They do not consistently monitor that pupils can retain important facts and details before moving onto the next topic. This hinders how well some pupils can remember and recall learning over time.

Leaders quickly identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They ensure that all teachers know how to support these pupils in lessons. They also carefully plan for additional support that pupils may need to keep up with their peers. The 'EHub' offers an alternative short-term curriculum to help pupils manage their worries about school. The 'Aspire' programme also provides targeted support in reading and mathematics. This helps participants to develop these essential learning skills. The sixth-form 'reading army' meets regularly with younger pupils. This provides opportunities for identified pupils to practise reading aloud. Staff also provide many opportunities within the curriculum to study a rich range of texts. This widens pupils' appreciation of literature.

Leaders have established a culture of respectful behaviour. Students in the sixth form are role models in the way they diligently apply themselves to all aspects of school life. Leaders know that the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has meant some pupils have struggled to attend school regularly. They have formed strong, positive relationships with many families to help remove barriers which prevent pupils from attending well. While there have been improvements over time, these have not been as rapid as leaders intend. Not all pupils are therefore benefiting sufficiently from the good education that the school provides.

Leaders have constructed a thoughtful personal, social and health education curriculum. This provides pupils with an understanding of the world around them. The curriculum is regularly informed by current affairs, such as prejudice within social media. It also develops pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. An abundance of enrichment opportunities widen pupils' interests and talents. However, currently, the ambition of leaders to ensure pupils get a meaningful careers education is not being realised. The curriculum does not yet provide an opportunity for all pupils to experience what the world of work looks like. Leaders are reviewing this so that all pupils benefit from this provision.

Leaders and governors are committed to providing a holistic education. They provide effective training to all staff so they know how to deliver the curriculum. Teachers engage with educational research and share their knowledge and skills to meet the needs of their pupils. Staff feel very well supported by leaders. However, leaders recognise that not all members of staff confidently understand the processes needed to improve aspects of the school, such as attendance. Therefore, some aspects of school improvement are not yet as impactful as they could be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe in school because they know who to go to for help. Teachers receive regular training to help them spot signs that a pupil may be at risk. Leaders sensitively communicate to staff any specific support arrangements in place for identified pupils. This supports a culture of vigilance. Leaders seek the help of external agencies when needed, and maintain effective communication with them to ensure support for pupils and their families.

Leaders make appropriate checks when recruiting staff. They provide a robust induction programme to make sure new staff understand their safeguarding responsibility.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not check that all pupils sufficiently understand new knowledge before moving on to new topics. Consequently, not all pupils develop an appropriate depth of understanding, making it harder to retain knowledge over time. Leaders must ensure that teachers have the support required to ensure they can regularly check what pupils know and understand.
- Too many pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. This puts pupils at risk of falling behind in their education. Leaders must ensure that all staff implement plans effectively to improve attendance, so that all pupils benefit from the education the school provides.

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	135888
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256304
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy special 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	1082
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	137
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Stallebrass
Principal	Hannah Knowles
Website	www.skinnerskentacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 and 23 February 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The number of students on roll at the sixth form has doubled since the last inspection.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses three registered providers of alternative provision for a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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, senior leaders, subject leaders, the leader responsible for pupils with SEND, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with governors and trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons and spoke to teachers. They looked at curriculum plans and pupils' work. They met with pupils to discuss their learning.
- An inspector visited the school's 'EHub' and 'Aspire' provision and looked at literacy work across the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding arrangements, including the school's central record of recruitment checks. Inspectors spoke to a variety of staff to check how well safeguarding referrals and systems work.
- Inspectors observed pupils around the school site during lunchtimes and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and groups of staff to hear their views. Inspectors also spoke to pupils and staff informally around the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential Ofsted surveys for staff and pupils, and Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Michelle Lower, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lorraine Clarke	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Webster	Ofsted Inspector
Paul James	Ofsted Inspector
Julia Mortimore	Ofsted Inspector

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