

Inspection of Hugh Christie School

White Cottage Road, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PU

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy learning in this inclusive school. They are motivated to try their best. The school rules of 'Ready, Respectful and Responsible' are evident across the curriculum. Pupils are knowledgeable about the importance of tolerance and inclusion, including characteristics protected by law. Groups such as the LGBT group promote alliance and community.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs and trips. These provide opportunities to develop new skills and interests. During 'advisories', pupils learn skills of leadership and effective communication. They can put these skills into practice through the student leadership groups that are empowered to make positive change.

Pupils report frustrations around the small, but significant, number of pupils who disrupt learning. These disruptions are not always managed well by staff. Consequently, in some lessons, pupils find it hard to focus and concentrate. Pupils report that bullying does happen, and typically staff try to resolve it effectively.

However, leaders do not check on the well-being and support for pupils who do not attend school regularly since the period of partial school closures caused by COVID-19. Many of these pupils have not re-engaged with their education because they are not provided with the specific support they need. In addition, leaders do not consistently take action to ensure pupils are safe when staff raise safeguarding concerns.

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

While leaders have positively developed many aspects of school life, they have not ensured that all pupils get the help they need to regularly attend school and behave well. Governors and senior leaders recognise the seriousness of this and have commissioned additional external support. However, leaders have not proactively acted upon this. Consequently, there is a clear lack of strategic understanding and direction to ensure all pupils benefit from an effective education.

Leaders do not take effective action to encourage pupils who are persistently absent to attend well. In addition, there are a number of pupils on reduced timetables. All too often, leaders report that less time in school leads to a further negative impact on a pupil's engagement. A lack of monitoring and further action means that too many pupils are not in school learning the intended curriculum.

The behaviour of some pupils is disruptive. Staff are not always consistent in managing behaviour. Leaders also do not maintain records of when they remove pupils from lessons for poor behaviour. As a result, there is a lack of understanding of what additional help individual pupils need to meet the behaviour expectations. The number of pupils suspended from school is high. A lack of support when these

pupils reintegrate back into school means that they can be repeatedly suspended, and leads to them missing even more of their education.

Leaders have carefully developed an ambitious and cohesive curriculum. The knowledge and skills pupils need to know at every stage of learning is clearly identified. Leaders recognise that not all pupils have achieved as well as they could in the past. They have made adaptations to allow pupils more opportunities to recap key information and apply this. An increasing number of pupils are now taking the English Baccalaureate. This is because more pupils are keen to study a modern foreign language. Pupils receive effective personalised help to help them make informed decisions when making their option choices.

The sixth-form curriculum is equally as well considered, with a wide range of vocational and academic courses on offer. This enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to choose a pathway that is right for them. These students are well supported by expert staff who use their knowledge to help students learn well.

Assessment across the school is purposeful. Pupils use precise feedback to revisit previous learning. Teachers start every lesson by checking how much knowledge pupils can remember. They then adapt learning to recap any aspects that pupils are unsure of, to ensure pupils can link what they know to new learning.

Leaders quickly identify the needs of pupils with SEND and provide support. They make sure that all teachers use appropriate information and training to ensure lessons are accessible for all. The 'Lighthouse' provision offers additional therapeutic support to help pupils manage their emotions. Those who need help to read also receive additional, effective support. A choice of well-selected, ambitious courses equips sixth-form students with SEND with skills needed for employment or further education. In addition to the well-developed careers programme, pupils with SEND also receive additional specialist support. This helps them to make informed career choices.

Pupils' understanding of the world around them is widened by plentiful opportunities to go on educational trips abroad or visit popular universities. A 'skills builder' programme further enhances pupils' employability skills. In the 'advisories' sessions, pupils read and debate articles on current affairs and global, social issues.

Staff feel very supported in their roles. They value the suite of effective training alongside the work of leaders and governors to carefully monitor their workload and well-being. Staff are happy to work in the school and are keen to make the necessary improvements to help all pupils learn well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders have not put in place systems that ensure all concerns about pupils' safety are quickly identified and acted upon. While staff are provided with training to help them identify when a pupil may be at risk of harm, leaders do not consistently take appropriate action when concerns are reported. Consequently, pupils and their families do not always get the vital support they need. Leaders also do not monitor the safety and welfare of pupils who do not attend regularly. This includes some pupils who have been absent for lengthy periods of time. This potentially puts pupils at risk of harm.

Leaders do not always ensure that there is effective communication with external agencies when requesting help for individual pupils. In addition, safeguarding records are not regularly updated and maintained. As a result, staff have an unclear picture of the safeguarding concerns about individual pupils and whether any help being provided is helping to ensure that pupils are safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is a lack of clarity and strategy around improving the poor behaviour of some pupils. At times, decisions to improve behaviour are not made in the best interests of pupils. Leaders and governors must take immediate action to improve the oversight of and support for these pupils.
- A significant number of pupils do not attend school regularly. Leaders' actions have not addressed this. This puts pupils at risk of falling behind in their education. Leaders must swiftly take action to ensure that there are robust and measurable plans in place to urgently improve attendance.
- Leaders do not always take swift and decisive action when concerned about pupils' welfare and safety. This means that some pupils may potentially be at risk of harm. Leaders and governors must ensure that they follow local arrangements for safeguarding and act without delay so pupils receive appropriate external help quickly.

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	118903
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256415
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
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	958
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sue Mason
Principal	Jon Barker (Executive Principal)
Website	www.hughchristie.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 and 6 December 2017

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Tonbridge Federation.
- The school uses six registered alternative providers of education.
- The school has a specialist resource provision for 22 pupils with autistic spectrum disorder.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 11 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- 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 executive principal, senior leaders, subject leaders, the leader responsible for pupils with SEND, many teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, art and design, history and modern foreign languages. 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.
- 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 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
Martin Smith	His Majesty's Inspector
James Stuart	His Majesty's Inspector
Owen McColgan	Ofsted Inspector

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