

Inspection of The Hastings Academy

Rye Road, Hastings, East Sussex TN35 5DN

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

The principal of this school is Simon Addison. This school is part of the University of Brighton Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Dr John Smith, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Professor Chris Pole.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders want the very best for pupils in the school. They are committed to improving behaviour and increasing attendance. Pupils confirm that behaviour is getting better. Attendance is improving, albeit slowly.

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is appropriate, engaging and challenging. However, some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are not sufficiently well supported in the classroom. Pastoral support is effective, and most pupils feel safe. They know that there are trusted adults to whom they can talk.

Pupils appreciate the changes which have been made recently. They want to work and achieve well. They benefit from assemblies that focus on celebration and their wider development. Tutor time activities are well planned but not always well delivered. The personal, social, health education (PSHE) programme is extensive but not yet fully supporting pupils' personal development.

Pupils value the range of extra-curricular activities available to them, including sport, art and intervention clubs, to boost their subject knowledge. Careers education is planned to support and encourage pupils to make good choices and understand what they need to do for the future. However, some pupils feel that advice is not tailored to their needs or provided often enough.

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

Pupils access an ambitious curriculum, which has been well planned in a number of subjects. However, it is not taught consistently well, so not all pupils make the progress they should. Increasing numbers of pupils study the broad English Baccalaureate suite of qualifications. However, despite work to raise the profile of languages in the school, numbers studying them at GCSE remains low.

Teachers use their subject knowledge well to support pupils' learning. However, pupils are not always able to effectively articulate the key knowledge they have accrued or how this links to previous knowledge. In some lessons, the intended learning is unclear.

Pupils are supported appropriately to develop their literacy skills. However, the quality of pupils' written work is variable. Reading is well supported through tutorial time. Early readers are identified and receive useful help to catch up with their peers. Ongoing checks usefully help adults identify where further support is needed.

Personal development is supported through the PSHE programme, which is extensive but not yet fully embedded. The programme is carefully built around core themes covering well-being, relationships and the wider world as well as financial literacy and personal safety. Links with the assembly and tutorial programmes, as well as other subjects, are still being developed.

There are clear policies and procedures to help staff manage pupils' behaviour, but they are not used consistently. Pupils' report some low-level disruption in lessons, when expectations for behaviour and learning are less clear. Leaders deal well with incidents of bullying, but issues are not always reported. Suspensions and exclusions are reducing over time.

Too many pupils are regularly absent from school. Actions taken by leaders have increased attendance across all groups, but the school acknowledges that there is more work to do. Leaders, supported by the trust, are taking action to improve attendance and ensure that pupils benefit from the education available. When pupils do attend, they arrive at school and their lessons on time.

Staff are proud to work at the school, including early career teachers who value the support provided. Staff value the high-quality training which they receive. They say that leaders support their workload and try to make it manageable. The trust collaborates effectively with school leaders in delivering training and supporting staff. However, governors do not always hold leaders sufficiently to account for the quality of education.

Senior leaders are relatively new in post. They have an ambitious vision for the school and are 'committed to delivering excellence'. They have worked hard to improve relationships with parents and the community. They have encouraged pupils to be much more involved in the life of the school, including taking on leadership roles. Their actions are beginning to secure improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The quality of education is not consistently good enough across the curriculum. Learning in lessons does not always build clearly and deliberately on pupils' previous work. Support for pupils, including those with SEND, is not effective. As a result, pupils do not always learn as well as they could. The school should ensure that staff deliver the intended curriculum consistently well, reflecting strong practice that already exists in some parts of the school, so that pupils learn well across the whole curriculum.
- Too many pupils miss too much school. This has a negative impact on their achievement and their personal development. Although leaders have improved the attendance of pupils and groups of pupils, their efforts need to continue to reduce levels of absence even further and ensure that pupils benefit from the education which the school provides.

- Behaviour is not consistently good. At times, behaviour can be disruptive to learning. Leaders should ensure that all staff are consistent in their approach to behaviour management, providing training and support where this is needed.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136401
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10287998
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	873
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Professor Chris Pole
CEO of the trust	Dr John Smith
Principal	Simon Addison
Website	www.thehastingsacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 March 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Hastings Academy is a below-average sized 11 to 16 mixed school. The school is part of the University of Brighton Academies Trust.
- The principal and two vice-principals were not in their posts at the time of the last inspection. They joined the school in September 2022.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at three registered education providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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, art and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, talked with teachers, spoke to pupils, and looked at samples of their work. Inspectors also spoke with a group of early career teachers about training and support.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, staff and pupils. They looked at school policies, curriculum documentation, behaviour logs, attendance records and destination statistics. They spoke with representatives of the alternative provision schools. The lead inspector met with trustees and governors. He also spoke to a group of parents.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils, and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire and additional written comments from parents. They reviewed the survey returns completed by staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Fearon	Ofsted Inspector
Tash Hurtado	Ofsted Inspector
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