

Inspection of Hugh Christie School

White Cottage Road, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PU

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils behave well and work hard. They have ambitious aspirations about their future education and employment. The school helps them realise these goals, both when pupils finish Year 11 and at the end of sixth form. Staff generally have high expectations, which means many pupils achieve well. Some pupils, however, do not meet these expectations because their behaviour is not consistently good. Additionally, some pupils are absent too frequently.

Leaders, governors and staff have rightly prioritised improving safeguarding since the last inspection. This has been successful. Pupils are safe and the majority enjoy school. Relationships between staff and many pupils are positive and respectful. If pupils are concerned about anything, including bullying, they are confident about raising their worries with staff. The pastoral support team makes sure that any issues are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Pupils have a range of opportunities to broaden their experiences. They enjoy the good-quality clubs, trips and visits that the school provides. Pupils develop leadership skills through taking on additional responsibilities. For example, sixth-form students apply for roles such as 'head students' or 'house champions'. Many sixth-formers use some of their free periods to support younger pupils' learning in lessons.

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

The school's curriculum is designed to meet pupils' needs and is generally ambitious. Teachers' strong subject knowledge helps many pupils to achieve well, including in the sixth form. The school organises the curriculum so that pupils build on their previous learning effectively. There is a clear focus on equipping pupils with necessary subject-specific knowledge and vocabulary. Some pupils receive timely additional help with learning to read outside of lessons, for example through small-group work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who attend the specially resourced provision, called 'The Lighthouse', have their particular needs identified precisely and met effectively. Proportions of pupils studying the full suite of subjects in the English Baccalaureate at key stage 4 are rising year on year, including pupils with SEND and other disadvantaged pupils. Where there are aspects of the curriculum that require further breadth, for example in computing, the school already has the right plans in place to improve.

Despite these positive dimensions, the quality of education is not yet as strong as it could be. Most importantly, although many pupils with SEND and other disadvantaged pupils get the extra help that they require in lessons, this is variable across the school. Consequently, these pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Teachers' checks on pupils' learning often identify any gaps, which teachers subsequently address. However, this process is not consistently effective for some pupils with additional needs, including pupils who are weaker readers.

While moving in the right direction, there is further to go before pupils' behaviour is consistently good. Some lessons are disrupted by the behaviour of a minority of pupils. Typically, these are relatively low-level incidents, for example pupils calling out or talking when they should not be doing so, or not engaging fully with lessons. Such behaviour disrupts these pupils' learning and that of others. However, pupils, staff and parents rightly agree that pupils' behaviour is improving. The school has raised expectations and provided training for staff about managing behaviour effectively. Leaders support teachers to put new approaches into practice. Many pupils concentrate well and participate fully in lessons.

Pupils' attendance rates are not high enough. Too many pupils miss school too often. In particular, some pupils with SEND and other disadvantaged pupils are absent too frequently, which has a negative effect on their achievement. The school has begun to tackle this vital issue with determination. There are now robust processes in place to track all pupils' whereabouts and to follow up on pupils' absences swiftly. However, while leaders have the right actions planned to raise attendance in the medium to long term, these have not had a substantial impact so far.

The school promotes pupils' character development through teaching them to be 'ready, responsible and respectful.' Pupils make positive contributions to school life and the wider community, for example through fundraising for local and national charitable causes. Pupils generally socialise well. Sixth-form students act as strong role models for younger pupils. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to keep themselves mentally and physically fit. They receive effective advice and guidance, which helps the vast majority of pupils to follow their chosen paths when they leave school. Sixth-formers particularly value their personal development 'passports', which help them track the rich experiences they gain at school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are pockets of low-level disruption in lessons when a minority of pupils do not behave as well as they should. This affects pupils' learning. The school should make sure that the renewed expectations of pupils' behaviour are implemented fully so that pupils' behaviour in lessons is consistently good across the school.
- Some pupils' attendance is too low, which has a negative impact on their achievement. In particular, pupils with SEND and other disadvantaged pupils are absent too often. The school should implement its plans to raise attendance so that there are demonstrable improvements.
- The specific needs of some pupils with SEND and other disadvantaged pupils are not met fully across the school in lessons, including those pupils who require

additional help with their reading. These pupils do not make as much progress through the curriculum as they could. The school should ensure that disadvantaged pupils' additional needs are identified precisely through effective assessment processes so that the right support is put into place to help them achieve well.

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	118903
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10311435
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
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	963
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lesley Broom
Headteacher	Palak Shah
Website	www.hughchristie.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 March 2023, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses three registered alternative providers of education.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. A total of 25 pupils with autism currently attend this provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school is a member of the Tonbridge Federation.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 met with the headteacher, senior leaders and other leaders. They met with a wide range of staff and pupils. They also spoke to a number of parents and considered some emails that parents had sent to inspectors.
- The inspection team visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, reviewed curriculum planning and spoke to leaders, teachers and pupils about the quality of education, including provision in the sixth form. Inspectors mainly focused on English, science, humanities, design and technology, mathematics and computing.
- A wide range of the school's documents were taken into consideration, including policies and the school's action plans.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body and scrutinised minutes of governing body meetings. He also spoke to a representative of the local authority.

Inspection team

Matthew Haynes, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Laurie Anderson	His Majesty's Inspector
Phillip Blagg	His Majesty's Inspector
Daniel Botting	His Majesty's Inspector
Mark Enser	His Majesty's Inspector
Alan Derry	His Majesty's Inspector

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