

# Inspection of The Whitstable School

Bellevue Road, Whitstable, Kent CT5 1PX

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Inspection dates: 12 and 13 March 2024

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The headteacher of this school is Alex Holmes. This school is part of Swale Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Michael Wilson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Goodson.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

There are high expectations for what every pupil in this school can achieve. Academic expectations have not been realised in the past, but the school has identified the barriers to achievement. The school and the trust have acted swiftly to bring in improvements. These changes mean that pupils are confident in discussing what they have learned. They produce high quality work and show a curiosity about the world. Pupils are now achieving well.

Most pupils behave very well. Lessons are very rarely disrupted by those in class. However, some pupils are not punctual to lessons and they sometimes cause a disturbance to others. These pupils do not reflect the expectations of the school for how they should behave. Measures have already been taken by the school to ensure that pupils are in lessons on time.

Pupils benefit from a very wide offer of clubs and other enrichment activities. The school ensures that disadvantaged pupils do not miss out on these opportunities. Pupils feel well-cared for at school and know that there are people who they can go to if they have any worries. This helps them to feel happy and safe.

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

The school has produced an ambitious and broad curriculum that runs right through to the sixth form. Students in the sixth form can select from a range of academic and vocational qualifications. The school is committed to ensuring that the sixth form serves the needs of its local community. They have made effective decisions to shape the curriculum to achieve this aim. A high proportion of pupils take EBacc subjects. This reflects the school's desire to offer pupils an academic curriculum alongside full suite of creative and technical subjects.

The school has taken a structured approach to lessons that is helping pupils to learn. In most lessons, pupils have many opportunities to think back to things they learned previously, to discuss their learning and to complete longer pieces of writing. Pupils receive high quality feedback. They act on this by reflecting on their work and making improvements. However, there is some inconsistency in how well these approaches to teaching are used and this is having a negative impact on what pupils know and can do.

Pupils are well supported to access this curriculum. Pupils who struggle, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are provided with effective help in lessons. This is especially true for those pupils who join the school with weaknesses in reading. The school quickly identifies their specific need and puts in place bespoke intervention to help them catch up with their peers. This has worked very well.

Last year, pupils did not achieve as highly as they could have done. The school has identified that attendance was a significant barrier to achievement. Those pupils

who attended regularly also achieved well. The school has worked with pupils and their parents and carers to improve attendance. Most pupils now attend well. Pupils usually have positive attitudes towards their time in school and their work. They want to do well and take pride in their work. The school has put in place approaches to support pupils whose attitude is more negative. This is starting to have a positive impact.

There is a well-planned curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education in key stages 3 and 4. The school is making improvements to the programme for personal development in the sixth form so that students recognise the relevance to their lives. At all phases, there is an extensive package of careers education. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about the world of work and their options for the future.

The school has recently widened its offer of clubs and pupils are keen to take advantage of these. Especially the wide range of activities now available during lunch times. The school has been proactive in identifying the kinds of activities that their pupils will benefit from the most and making sure that this is what is offered.

Leaders carry out rigorous and robust monitoring. They do this to make sure that they know whether the changes they make have a positive impact on all pupils. Leaders are especially alert to the impact that any changes have on pupils with SEND. They are also mindful of the workload and well-being of staff. The school has made sure that teachers can focus on those activities that will be of the most benefit to the pupils. Leaders at all levels have been heavily involved in ensuring that safeguarding is effective. A strong culture of safeguarding permeates the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Too many pupils are late to lessons. This means that they miss out on their learning and at times prevent others from learning. The school needs to continue the work to change the culture so that these pupils arrive at their lessons in a timely manner.
- In some subjects, teaching is not as consistently strong as it could be. The approaches to teaching and learning are not always used in the way that the school intended. This means that pupils do not achieve as highly as they could do. The school needs to ensure that all teachers understand the principles behind the practices they use so that they can put them into action consistently 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144354
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10296442
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1138
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	81
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Paul Goodson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alex Holmes
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thewhitstableschool.org.uk">www.thewhitstableschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Date(s) of previous inspection</b>	13 and 14 December 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of Swale Academies Trust.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection of this school.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers.
- 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.

## Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) 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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with leaders including the headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and other leaders. The lead inspector also met with a member of the local governing body and with members of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, history, technology, religious education and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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 a range of staff and considered their views through the confidential online staff survey.
- Inspectors met with pupils formally and informally around the school, in lessons and at breaktime. Inspectors took account the views of parents through the responses to the Ofsted Parent View.

## Inspection team

Mark Enser, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Judy Rider	Ofsted Inspector
Christie Ransom	Ofsted Inspector
James Stuart	His Majesty's Inspector

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