

Cornwallis Academy

Hubbards Lane, Linton, Maidstone, Kent ME17 4HX

Inspection dates

28–29 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since her appointment, the headteacher has raised the aspirations of both staff and pupils. She has acted decisively in implementing significant changes to improve the progress of current pupils.
- Governors know the school well. They support and challenge leaders vigorously to ensure that prompt actions are taken to raise standards.
- Governors and leaders recognise that a legacy of weak teaching has led to poor outcomes for pupils in recent years. Leaders' actions ensure that current pupils are making strong progress.
- Teachers know pupils' strengths and weaknesses well and adapt learning precisely to meet the needs of different ability groups.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength that enables them to ask insightful questions of pupils. This helps pupils to gain greater knowledge and develop deeper understanding of their work.
- Newly qualified teachers value the support they receive. Performance management of teachers is focused on raising standards further.
- Not all teachers follow the school's agreed approach to feedback, leading to some pupils not knowing how to improve their work.
- Leaders have improved academic standards in the sixth form so that students make more progress than those in other schools nationally.
- Students in the sixth form are supported well and receive good guidance. This leads to high numbers continuing into higher education, employment or apprenticeships.
- Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Pupils feel safe and staff support them well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. The previous high level of exclusions is reducing rapidly as a new culture of respect is established.
- Pupils have the opportunity to experience a broad and balanced curriculum appropriate to their needs. A range of additional activities provides many cultural, creative and sporting experiences.
- The attendance of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, has been below the national average in recent years. Leaders are taking necessary steps to raise the attendance further.
- Leaders have acted promptly to eliminate previously weaker teaching.
- A minority of teachers do not check well enough that pupils understand their work.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and governors should take prompt action to further improve pupils' attendance.
- Leaders should improve the quality of teaching and learning to continue to accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring that staff routinely implement the school's agreed approach to assessment
 - sharing the good practice in teaching more widely across the school
 - making sure that teachers systematically check that pupils understand their work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school has been on a rapid journey of improvement since the appointment of the current headteacher. She has made many positive changes. For example, she has raised the aspirations of both staff and pupils. Staff know what is expected of them. Consequently, the culture of the school is changing to one that has high ambitions for all pupils. One parent commented, 'The leadership has positively changed since the current headteacher was appointed.'
- Leaders have made raising the quality of teaching a priority, because they recognised that weak teaching in the past had resulted in below-average outcomes for some pupils. Expectations are now higher. Subject leaders are responsible for checking for the quality of teaching and learning, while teachers are held stringently to account for pupils' outcomes. Consequently, current pupils are doing well across the school.
- Teachers appreciate the training they receive with its strong focus on improving the quality of teaching. Senior and middle leaders know what good learning looks like and are able to identify accurately areas for improvement. Leaders ensure that teachers who need further support get the help and advice they need to improve their practice. Newly qualified teachers and those in their first few years of teaching speak positively about the support that they receive and the opportunities that they are given for career development. Leaders know that good practice in teaching must continue to be shared more widely to address those areas that remain weaker.
- The headteacher, supported by the chief executive officer, has ensured that external support has been used to improve standards further. For example, teachers have worked with colleagues from other schools to moderate their assessment of GCSE work.
- Teachers prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. The 'well-being' programme in tutor time provides numerous opportunities for pupils to explore social and moral issues. Pupils are provided with frequent opportunities to discuss and debate difficult issues. For example, pupils discussed the topic of conscientious objectors in history with sensitivity.
- Leaders provide a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate to pupils' needs. They ensure that pupils are prepared well for their future courses. Pupils have access to a broad range of additional activities such as drama productions, outdoor activities, sporting opportunities and cultural experiences.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the varying needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. SEN funding, and funding for Year 7 pupils who need additional literacy and numeracy support, is carefully planned. Pupils are now making good progress and differences between their achievement and that of other pupils are diminishing.
- The headteacher has taken appropriate action to ensure that funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used well. For example, a group of pupils who were frequently absent now attend more regularly as a result of interventions funded by the pupil premium.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This enables them to challenge leaders forcefully to ensure that the appropriate actions are in place to raise pupils' attainment further.
- Governors are ambitious for the school and fully recognise that standards in the past have not been good enough. They ensure that performance management of teachers is linked closely to pupil outcomes.
- Governors manage the school's finances well to ensure that necessary improvements are made to support learning further. However, in the past, governors have not received enough information on how well pupil premium funding has been used. Plans for the current year are much clearer to enable them to evaluate how effectively the funding is being spent.
- Governors take their responsibilities for safeguarding very seriously. They closely monitor incidents and the actions taken by leaders to ensure that pupils are safe. Governors have taken the relevant safeguarding training.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils. The recording of these checks meets statutory requirements.
- Leaders have a clear vision for safeguarding, which they see as everyone's responsibility. All staff have received appropriate training. Policies are up to date and cover issues such as 'sexting', and extremism. Staff understand their role and are knowledgeable about safeguarding issues.
- Site security is managed well, ensuring that pupils remain safe.
- Staff are vigilant of pupils' needs and ensure that where concerns exist referrals are made to the appropriate agencies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength. Consequently, pupils, especially the most able, are provided with suitably challenging work. Teachers adapt the learning precisely to meet the needs of different ability groups. This is seen in well-structured English and mathematics lessons.
- Teachers know pupils' strengths and weaknesses well and encourage pupils to attempt progressively harder work within a supportive lesson structure. This enables all pupils to access the work and develop proficiency.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported well in the classroom both by learning support assistants and by teachers directing questions appropriately. This approach was seen working very effectively in English.

- Teachers use insightful questioning to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding more deeply. Effective questioning that encouraged analytical responses from pupils was used to good effect in history.
- When teachers' expectations are clear and consistent, pupils respond with enthusiasm and a desire to learn. Strong positive relationships between teachers and pupils exist across all subjects.
- Where teachers use the school's agreed approach to assessment effectively, pupils are able to reflect on their learning and understand how to make their work better. A minority of teachers do not follow the school's assessment policy closely enough, and so pupils do not have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. This is particularly evident in some geography and science groups.
- Pupils are provided with homework that helps to both consolidate their learning and challenge them further.
- Where teaching is strong, teachers are able to use a range of appropriate classroom strategies to engage and challenge learners well.
- Parents receive regular updates on the progress of their children. However, not all parents were positive about the frequency of homework and communication with school.
- Some teachers do not check carefully enough whether pupils have understood what has been taught. Consequently, the work set does not always meet pupils' needs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good, leading to pupils being confident learners. Most pupils are keen to learn, get to lessons on time and readily involve themselves in learning. The 'well-being' programme in tutor time ensures that pupils know what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They are aware of topics such as extremism, gang culture and online safety. They report that bullying is infrequent, and that staff deal with any issues well. Pupils speak positively about the 'pit stop' that provides additional support for vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils who attend off-site provision at the Maidstone and Malling Alternative Provision and The Gateway are able to follow a suitable range of courses. Teachers work closely with alternative providers to check that pupils are safe and to ensure that these pupils attend regularly and succeed. Where possible, pupils who attend alternative provision resume their studies at school. Leaders are continuing to work directly with these providers to ensure that the provision continues to meet pupils' needs.
- One parent said: 'My child has blossomed at Cornwallis. They treat him in a mature way.' This comment illustrates how well staff support pupils' personal development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and wear their uniform with pride. Pupils like the school environment and there is very little litter seen around the site. They show respect both towards each other and to adults.
- Leaders have worked closely with teachers to ensure that there is a consistent approach to ensuring that pupils behave well. The number of fixed-term exclusions and the number of pupils using the isolation room is reducing. Furthermore, pupils report that behaviour has improved in the last two years. Low-level disruption is rare.
- Attendance remains well below the national average for all pupils. Leaders recognise the urgent need to improve attendance, and have put in place a range of suitable strategies to improve it. Attendance is beginning to improve, especially in key stage 3.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Published outcomes for 2016 show that pupils' progress overall was in line with national averages. Pupils made particularly strong progress in English and science, while in mathematics and humanities, pupils made similar progress to that seen nationally.
- Provisional results achieved by pupils in Year 11 in 2017 show that in English pupils made broadly average progress. However, provisional outcomes were below national averages in subjects such as mathematics, science, languages and humanities. A significant number of pupils in the year group joined the school after the usual admission time in Year 7. Consequently, they did not receive as much teaching as other pupils and so they did not do as well.
- Current pupils' attainment is improving strongly in most subjects. Pupils' work clearly indicates that current pupils are on track to reach good standards by the end of the year because leaders have taken prompt action to improve the quality of teaching where weaknesses were identified.
- Published and provisional outcomes for disadvantaged pupils demonstrate that they made less progress than all other pupils nationally in both 2016 and 2017. However, there is no discernible difference in the standard of work produced by current disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils. This is because leaders are much clearer now than previously about how to make the most effective use of pupil premium funding to improve outcomes for these pupils.
- Pupils are now making better progress across a wider range of subjects, including those where pupils had not achieved so well in the past. Pupils who attend off-site provision are able to take a broad range of courses and make good progress.
- Most-able pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils are provided with challenging tasks. As a result, these pupils produce work of a high standard. Those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported well and are now making good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They are provided with good careers advice which ensures that they follow courses matched to their ability. In

addition, leaders are raising the aspiration of disadvantaged pupils in Year 7 through visits to local universities.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Senior leaders have high expectations of students in the sixth form. Students follow individual programmes that build on their prior attainment, leading to strong progress.
- Progress made by students following A-level qualifications in 2016 was significantly above the national average. While students' A-level results were lower in 2017, their progress remained strong. Higher targets have been set for current students to raise their aspirations further.
- Leaders' close monitoring, together with timely interventions, have led to pupils' vocational qualification results improving in 2017, with a higher percentage of students achieving the highest standards.
- Students are both challenged and supported by teachers, and make solid progress in academic subjects. Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength and precise questioning stretches students, including the most able, to help them achieve their potential.
- Students speak positively about the careers information, advice and guidance they receive in Year 11 which ensures that they follow the most appropriate course. The number of students who remain in education, employment or training is very high. Students achieve relevant qualifications to be able to access higher education, obtain employment or gain access to follow apprenticeships. As one parent said: 'I can honestly say the school has played a big part in how my son has grown into a confident young man, ready to experience university.'
- A well-constructed personal, social, health and economic education programme helps to develop students' skills and employability. All students in Year 12 have the opportunity to undertake work experience. Sixth-form students are good role models to other year groups. They have positive attitudes and take on additional responsibilities within the school, for example, in leading the school council.
- Students who did not achieve standard pass grades in English and/or mathematics at GCSE are making strong progress compared to other students nationally. They are offered a broader range of courses than previously which enables them to progress well into their further studies.

School details

Unique reference number	135371
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10024645

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,304
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	283
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Graham Niblock
Headteacher	Mrs Isabelle Linney-Drouet
Telephone number	01622 743152
Website	www.futureschoolstrust.com
Email address	officecornwallis@futureschoolstrust.com
Date of previous inspection	27 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Cornwallis Academy is part of the Future Schools Trust. A local governing body oversees the work of the academy and reports to the board of directors. The headteacher is line managed by the chief executive officer for the trust.

- The school is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school, with a sixth form.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small proportion of pupils do not speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is just below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with middle and low starting points on entry is well above the national average. Conversely, the proportion of pupils with high starting points on entry is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Some pupils attend off-site provision at Maidstone and Malling Alternative Provision provided through the local authority, and The Gateway provided by the Future Schools Trust.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection started out as a short inspection of a good school under section 8 of the Education Act, 2005. It converted to a full section 5 inspection on day 1 so that the team could be expanded in order to gather further evidence.
- Inspectors observed learning in 84 lessons, including a number of short visits to tutor rooms. Several lessons were visited jointly with senior leaders. During visits to classes, inspectors looked at pupils' work in books.
- Inspectors also examined a selection of pupils' work from key stages 3 and 4.
- Meetings were held with staff, including newly qualified teachers, academic senior and middle leaders, pastoral leaders, the chair of the governing body, the executive headteacher of the Future Schools Trust, and an external adviser working with the school. Inspectors took account of 72 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors took account of 88 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as written comments submitted by 81 parents and one email to Ofsted.
- Pupils' views were gathered from meetings with groups from Years 7 to 11, the sixth form and from Ofsted's student questionnaire. Informal conversations with pupils took place around the school site.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation. This included leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, the school's self-evaluation, information about standards and pupils' progress, the school's website, records of behaviour and attendance, governors' minutes and a range of policies and information including those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Christopher Lee, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Peter Swan	Ofsted Inspector
Frederick Valletta	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Powell	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Baker	Ofsted Inspector

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