

Dover Christ Church Academy

Melbourne Avenue, Whitfield, Dover, CT16 2EG

Inspection dates 2–3 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' achievement is too variable between subjects and between groups of students. Their achievement requires improvement.
- The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics does not regularly meet the government's expected minimum standards.
- The achievement for students known to be eligible for additional government funding, disabled students and those with special educational needs also requires improvements in English and mathematics. Their progress varies too much between year groups.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Some teachers do not always plan activities at the right level of difficulty for their students.
- Teachers do not always systematically use assessment effectively and give guidance for students to check their knowledge, understanding and skills. This means that students do not always make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not always help students to reflect and act upon guidance given that would allow them to improve their learning more quickly.
- The small number of students taught in the additional provision do not make enough progress over time.

The school has the following strengths

- The newly appointed principal and new senior leadership team have quickly identified strengths and areas needed for improvement. The weaknesses are being addressed and there is an improving picture.
- Sixth form provision is good. Sixth form students achieve well and like taking on leadership roles in the academy.
- Students who attend the Aspen 2 unit integrate well with other students in lessons and at break and lunchtime. All students welcome this.
- Relations between staff and students are good and this helps students feel extremely safe. Students say behaviour has improved.
- Governors understand the actions needed to improve the academy still further.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons, six of which were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors made a number of shorter visits to other lessons. Inspectors observed an assembly and tutor periods.
- Inspectors held meetings with several groups of students, members of the senior leadership team, leaders in charge of subjects and other aspects of the school’s work. Inspectors also met with teachers new to the school and profession.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the local authority and the academy’s sponsor, Canterbury Christ Church University. The lead inspector also met with members of the governing body.
- Inspectors discussed lessons they had seen with teaching staff. They examined a range of documents, including the school’s self-evaluation, its plans for improvement and student progress information.
- Inspectors evaluated the school’s own information about exclusions, attendance and behaviour. They also considered evidence of how effectively it spends additional funding (known as the pupil premium).
- Inspectors looked at a range of students work in lessons.
- Inspectors took into account 25 responses to Ofsted’s Parent View questionnaire.
- The inspection team considered questionnaires completed by 37 members of staff.

Inspection team

Jackie Jones, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Valerie Fenhers	Additional inspector
Stephen Wilson	Additional inspector
Veronica Young	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Dover Christ Church is an 11–18 academy. It is smaller than the average secondary school, with 100 in the sixth form.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (this is additional government funding for students entitled to free school meals and in the care of the local authority) is double the national average.
- There are 24 students eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding. This is funding for students who did not achieve Level 4 (the nationally expected level) in English or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A specifically resourced provision for students with special educational needs at the academy is called Aspen 2. There are 40 students on roll who have a wide range of profound, severe and complex needs: severe learning, profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- Five students attended alternative provision to support their behavioural needs, but students are now taught and supervised within the academy. No alternative provision is used.
- The academy is sponsored by Canterbury Christ Church University, Dover Grammar School for Girls, Dover Grammar School for Boys and Kent local authority.
- The principal has been appointed since the last inspection and there have been significant changes to the senior leadership team since the last inspection.
- A major rebuilding project is underway on the site.
- The academy holds the Leading Parent Partnership award.
- The academy did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2014, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. In 2013, the floor standards were met.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement and the quality of teaching further by ensuring that:
 - the academy meets the governments floor standards for students' achievement in English and mathematics as soon as possible
 - the quality of teaching is consistently good or outstanding by sharing more fully through the academy the features of effective teaching
 - teachers plan activities more effectively that enable all students to make the best possible progress
 - students have more information on how to improve their learning through teachers' one-to-one guidance and marking
 - students are able to respond to teachers' feedback and marking so that they demonstrate that they know how to improve their learning
 - ensuring students' writing skills are developed fully across the school and within other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The new principal quickly reorganised her senior leadership team and identified areas for improvement in the academy. They rapidly put in place a raft of changes. These have had a very positive impact on the ethos, sixth form provision, students' attendance and behaviour.
- The changes had not been in place long enough to have a significant impact on raising the latest GCSE results. The academy's projections and current checks on progress, however, are much more positive in terms of their expected performance in national tests next year.
- The principal has very strong support from her staff. Students, as well as their parents, recognise the significant improvements made by the leadership of the academy since the last inspection. Responses in Parent View showed a significant improvement in satisfaction with the leadership of the school.
- The senior leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate. They correctly assess and identify where student's learning must improve.
- The leadership of the academy regularly checks progress of its plans and actions to improve. This gives the staff and governors greater clarity about areas needing rapid progress.
- Senior leaders increasingly hold middle leaders to account for the progress of their students. Many middle leaders have a clear understanding of those students making better progress and those who may be falling behind.
- The new leadership team in the Aspen 2 unit are improving aspiration for students, raising the quality of teaching and ensuring the curriculum promotes good learning.
- All staff spoke very highly about the training they have recently received. As a result, they were confident about developing their leadership skills.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is adapted to the needs of most students and is regularly revised and reviewed. The academy has reduced the number of vocational qualifications it offers. For the more able students at Key Stage 3, the curriculum provides courses that are more academic, for example, in history and religious education. A wide range of extra-curricular activities prepares students well for life in modern Britain, for example, by participation in parliamentary debates and in public speaking competitions.
- Checks on staff performance relate fully to the national Teachers' Standards. Salary progression links to students' performance. Leaders have taken action to improve the quality of teaching in key departments. This is beginning to have an impact on students' achievement. The changes were not fully in effect to positively affect the GCSE results in 2014.
- The leadership do not tolerate inequality. The academy effectively uses additional funding to support all students' participation in activities provided by the school. Senior leaders monitor the participation of vulnerable groups is carefully.
- Senior leaders quickly made the decision to no longer use alternative provision for a small number of students. This is to ensure these students are monitored and provided for more directly.
- Senior leaders, staff and governors are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and high quality safeguarding. The recent appointment of a highly effective specialist, who keeps a close eye on students' progress, is helping minimise differences between students' achievements.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well and is weaved effectively within the curriculum. As a result, students develop a good understanding of life in modern Britain. They also have respect and tolerance for all groups in society. In an assembly, students reflected in a mature way on moral choices made by people in the public eye.
- The academy works very well with parents through consultation evenings and involvement in pastoral matters where appropriate. The academy supports parents in their own learning through the provision of courses and support groups. This has led to the academy receiving a Leading Parent Partnership award.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance of the academy is a strength. Governors have developed their challenge and support since the last inspection. They are fully involved in reviewing performance and setting the academy's priorities through discussion of the school improvement plan. They are well equipped to carry out their statutory duties, which they do effectively. They have a largely accurate view of the academy's strengths and weaknesses and how students' performance compares to the national picture. They are clear about the sustained improvements needed to be good overall. They have a good understanding about the impact of additional funding and how it must help increase the progress of eligible students. Governors are aware of what is being done to reward good teachers and tackle underperformance through regular and

more rigorous checks on staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good because most have positive attitudes to their learning. This helps them make progress in their lessons. Some students do not actively engage in their learning where teaching is less effective. This slows their progress.
- Students report that behaviour has improved over time so that lessons are less disturbed by low-level disruption. Students are well equipped for all their lessons and ready to learn.
- Students take a pride in their school. They wear their uniform proudly. Staff regularly check and correct students who do not meet the academy's high standards.
- Students respect their environment. There is very little litter and no evidence of graffiti. This has been maintained during a major on-site building project.
- Students conduct themselves well around the academy. They move sensibly to lessons and mix well at break and lunchtime. Students from Aspen 2 share the same social times with the rest of the academy. Students like this opportunity to mix and this contributes to students developing a keen sense of tolerance and understanding of different groups in society.
- Students are polite to visitors, holding doors open and being willing to engage in conversation.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Students feel extremely safe in the school and the curriculum supports them very well in learning how to stay safe. They have a very good understanding of how to respond to a variety of risks, including e-safety and possible domestic violence.
- The rate of fixed-term and permanent exclusions is below national averages. This is the result of the academy using a variety of effective approaches to encourage better behaviour and regular attendance.
- Students report that the academy staff react very effectively to the very rare incidents of bullying, including racist or other forms of prejudiced-based bullying. Students reported that students who are lesbian, bisexual, gay or transgender feel safe and accepted by the whole academy.
- As the result of a range of very effective strategies, students' attendance and punctuality are very good. Attendance is above the national average.
- The majority of responses to Parent View indicated that students are happy at the academy and feel safe. Those responding to the staff survey were of the same opinion.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement. It is not consistently good across the academy to ensure that all students make the best possible progress from their starting points.
- Academy leaders have identified weak areas of teaching are tackling underperformance. They have worked on questioning and guidance to students on how to improve their learning through feedback on their work. However, not all teachers apply these methods. These changes, therefore, have not yet had a sustained effect on improving GCSE results, particularly last year.
- Teachers' guidance to students on how to improve their learning, although effective in some classes, lacks consistency across the academy. Teachers generally give students advice about how to further improve their work and learning. However, not all teachers help students to reflect and act upon this advice.
- At times, some teachers do not set suitable work adapted for students' different abilities. Consequently, more-able students are not stretched and spend time on work that is too easy for them. This means that these students do not always make the best possible progress.
- In lessons where students make better progress, teachers provide engaging activities for their students and ensure that no time is wasted. They check students' understanding frequently and use questioning skilfully to make sure that progress is good. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, questioning was used effectively to probe students' understanding of simplifying and expanding brackets. Students made links in patterns in numbers, so embedding their understanding of this aspect of the subject.

- The academy has worked hard to promote students' literacy skills. In a Year 10 English lesson, two students explained convincingly why they preferred reading *Of Mice and Men* to watching the film version.
- A wide range of effective approaches is helping improve students' abilities. These have been successful in improving students' reading ages. This, in turn, is beginning to improve their achievement and enjoyment of the written word.
- There is a developing focus on extended students' writing. This has yet to have a sustained impact on students' achievement across all subjects and year groups.
- Teaching assistants support students in lessons. In the Aspen 2 provision, they are very effective so that these students make good progress. However, this is not always so when supporting students in the main school.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students join the academy with attainment that is significantly below the national average. GCSE results in 2014 did not meet the government's minimum standards for the five A*-C including English and mathematics measure. The progress of very few students who attended alternative provision was not satisfactory.
- The progress students make in mathematics has improved so that it is now close to national averages. This is not yet the case in English, where they were just below national averages. Students do not consistently write to the expected standard.
- The progress of the more able students is improving in English and mathematics. They are now achieving national averages, but their progress slows when their learning is not extended.
- The progress of students who are eligible for additional funding is variable across year groups. In English, the gap was half a grade. In mathematics, the gap was a grade. The progress of students in the academy is closing compared to that of students nationally.
- The achievement of students with special educational needs requires improvement, particularly in mathematics and science. However, they make quicker progress in English.
- Academy leaders have taken strong actions to raise standards such as the restaffing key departments. These are beginning to show an effect. In mathematics, GCSE results improved in 2014 so that they moved significantly closer to national expectations. Science results made a significant improvement in 2014. They are now close to national averages.
- Students entitled to this additional funding are making better progress in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 so that the gap is closing in English. In mathematics, their progress is less consistent.
- The academy uses additional funding well for students in Year 7 who need to catch up with their peers in English and mathematics. There are a variety of support strategies provided by the academy such as small group tuition and one-to-one tutoring. As a result, these students are making progress in line with that of other students.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The sixth form provision is good. Students enter the sixth form with below-average attainment. Achievement has risen consistently so that it now matches national averages for academic and vocational qualifications.
- Gaps in the progress of students needing additional help and that of others are closing rapidly. In 2014, there was no gap in average point scores between disadvantaged students and others. This is the result of better teaching and higher expectations from teachers.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Staffing changes have contributed to the improvement in the quality of teaching and achievement.
- The majority of students complete their chosen qualifications. On the rare occasions that students leave before the end of Key Stage 5, it is to follow other forms of education or training such as apprenticeships.
- Students are positive in their attitudes to learning. They say that teaching is effective and that they are encouraged to become more self-reliant in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Students welcome the opportunities for leadership within the academy. They act as reading mentors for younger students and as student representatives at open and parents' evenings.
- The curriculum in the sixth form has a good balance of academic and vocational courses. It prepares them well for the next stage of their education, employment and training. For example, the school provides a City and Guilds qualification for those studying hair and beauty, while Aspen 2 students study functional

skills. The balance in the curriculum is moving to a more academic model as attainment improves at Key Stage 4. For example, 18 students are studying AS mathematics.

- All students follow the 16–19 study programme. All students benefit from work experience. Students who did not achieve a GCSE grade C in English or mathematics follow a course of study to achieve this alongside their other subjects.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good. There is a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses and how it can improve further.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136175
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	442492

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	632
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kerry Jordan-Daus
Headteacher	Sam Williamson
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 October 2012
Telephone number	01304 820126
Fax number	01304 821915
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