

Causeway School

Larkspur Drive, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN23 8EJ

Inspection dates

22–23 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not been able to secure improvements to pupil outcomes as quickly as is needed. Recent strengthening of middle leadership is yet to make a significant difference across a range of subjects.
- Standards by the end of Year 11 have remained stubbornly low for a number of years, and are only just beginning to improve.
- Leaders do not evaluate the impact of actions quickly or carefully enough, so the rate of improvement is impeded. They try to do too much at once, rather than prioritising what makes the biggest difference to learning and progress.
- Strengthening of governance has not secured wider support for school leaders as quickly as is needed.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not consistently achieve as well as other pupils nationally across a range of subjects. Although the differences are diminishing in some subject areas, they remain too large and have grown in others.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school. Provision in lessons is not precise enough to promote rapid progress for all. Teaching does not carefully target next steps that are suitably challenging from individual starting points, particularly for the most able.
- Less-able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not achieve as well as they should. Their progress is not fast enough to help them catch up with their peers.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are respectful and courteous towards each other and their teachers, which creates a pleasant learning environment for everyone.
- Parents, pupils and staff recognise the positive improvements to the school, particularly in relation to how pupils behave in lessons and around the school.
- The curriculum and learning culture have been transformed to meet the needs of learners, and equip them well for future learning.
- Leaders and governors share a common ethos based on deep learning, and remain committed to doing whatever it takes to secure long-term improvement. The headteacher and his team have remained resolute in this goal, despite significant staffing challenges.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and culture development is a strength, with pupils benefiting from a range of opportunities which support their holistic development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Intensify the effectiveness of leaders' work, so that:
 - subject leaders are held to account and supported in achieving high-quality teaching and better pupil progress across their departments
 - future actions are closely based on sharp evaluation of what makes the biggest and quickest difference to pupils' learning
 - strengthened governance works alongside extra capacity secured from outside the school to help leaders sustain recent improvements.
- Improve the rates of pupil progress, so that:
 - pupils achieve more consistently strongly across a range of subjects and throughout their time at the school
 - differences in performance of the disadvantaged, the least able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, when compared to similar groups nationally, are diminished.
- Embed and develop the consistent approach to learning and teaching that is now in place, so that:
 - teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are raised
 - pupils take greater control of their own learning to strengthen their understanding
 - pupils who are the most able are challenged to make better progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have been slow to secure improvements in teaching and learning over time. The actions they have taken to improve the quality of teaching and pupil behaviour have not resulted in better outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders do not evaluate the impact of their actions sharply or quickly enough. As a result, their significant efforts have not made a difference to the academic achievement of pupils as promptly as they needed to.
- Leaders and governors have not secured the extra capacity they know this small school needs to be able to stabilise and move forward. Changes to governance structure and the rigour with which governors hold leaders to account have been too slow in making a difference to pupil achievement by the end of Year 11.
- Opportunities for pupils to study design and technology subjects are limited. Leaders are creative in exploring ways that pupils can gain greater access to these subjects, but are restricted by budgetary constraints and other priorities.
- Changes to, and absence of, staff in several key middle leadership roles have adversely affected results in recent years. Leadership is now stable and the impact of some leaders who are newer to their posts is beginning to be seen.
- The curriculum has been significantly changed to provide increased challenge and better prepare pupils for life beyond school. Pupils now study a broad range of academic GCSE qualifications. The proportion of pupils studying languages and humanities subjects has increased over time.
- Pupils' learning in class is suitably enriched through a range of additional activities, such as sports and performing arts clubs. Alternative provision is used effectively to respond to the specific needs of a small group of pupils. A love of reading is encouraged, with reading activities incorporated into lessons. The library plays an active role in supporting pupils with their learning.
- The wider curriculum prepares pupils well for the future. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe online and in the community. They know what it means to be a British citizen, and are respectful of the different cultures they learn about.
- Leaders have established a good environment for learning, where pupils behave well and want to work. Over the course of the inspection, several remarked that in these respects, 'this is the best this school has ever been'.
- The headteacher and his senior leaders have remained committed to developing an ethos of long-term learning within the school. They have earned the confidence of pupils, parents and staff in the values they have worked towards. They have diligently steered the school through a period of significant turbulence, and have ensured that staffing is now more stable.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed to making a positive difference to the pupils at this school. They have reflected on and changed their structure and practice in order to meet the needs of the school more effectively. They have strengthened their skillset through training and recruitment.

- Governors recognise the additional leadership capacity that is needed and have very recently secured the appointment of an interim executive board to help realise this. They work with increased rigour but need to maintain recent momentum so that vital support from beyond the school will help leaders to secure measurable improvements to pupil outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. This is clearly shown by the culture of care and support that exists across the school. Pupils are safe and well looked after.
- Clear and appropriate systems are in place to ensure the health and well-being of pupils. Pupils know who to speak to if they have concerns, and staff understand their responsibilities with respect to this important aspect of the school.
- Leaders and governors ensure that people working in the school are appropriately checked and trained. They work closely with professionals outside of school where children are identified as being vulnerable.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Pupils currently at the school have not made consistently good progress over time because the quality of teaching is too variable. There is some strong teaching leading to good learning, but this is not consistent enough.
- Teachers' expectations for pupil engagement are high, but not consistently challenging enough to secure strong and rapid progress. Pupils are not stretched beyond their comfort zone to deepen their thinking. Progress is slow and steady, lacking the pace required for pupils to achieve strong outcomes by the end of Year 11.
- The feedback pupils receive about their work does not sufficiently help them to make more rapid progress. Pupils do not consistently use feedback to build on their prior learning and move on to next steps.
- Teachers use questioning well to check pupils' understanding and to help them develop their thinking. In some lessons, pupils ask thoughtful questions to check their own understanding and be clear about what is required of them.
- Teachers assess pupils' learning carefully at key points across the year, in a way that is increasingly rigorous and precise. Leaders check the accuracy of this information, holding teachers to account for its reliability. However, this information does not closely influence teachers' planning for future learning that would enable pupils from different starting points to make rapid progress.
- Pupils behave well in lessons across the range of their subjects, displaying courtesy, respect and an interest in what they are learning. Teachers know their pupils well and establish a learning environment in which they feel safe and encouraged to learn.
- Parents and pupils report that homework is used well to support learning in lessons. A range of extra-curricular opportunities helps pupils who might need additional support to complete this work. For example, the library is a vibrant study space and offers a homework club after school each day which is well used by pupils.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils understand increasingly their role as learners, and arrive at lessons ready to work and keen to do well.
- Pupils develop their leadership skills and take on responsibilities in a range of ways. They act as anti-bullying ambassadors and house captains. They also participate in events such as cookery competitions, drama workshops and productions, which improve their wider skills and confidence.
- Staff understand their responsibilities for the pupils in their care and act accordingly. Pupils who need extra help are supported appropriately using external agencies. Leaders have established a safeguarding culture which makes clear that protecting children from harm is the first priority for everyone.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision benefit from access to particularly specialist opportunities, which help them to be successful in their learning.
- A small number of pupils told inspectors that they are not prepared for life beyond school as much or as early as they would like. They want to know more about the options available to them when they leave school, and do not feel sufficiently prepared.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and report that they feel safe. Corridors are calm and orderly. Pupils of all ages interact well with each other, helping each other during tutor sessions and around the school site.
- Pupils behave respectfully in lessons, creating an environment where it is clear that they want to learn. Teachers use a simple and well-understood system to manage any poor behaviour that arises, so that learning time is not wasted.
- Attendance is improving and is now in line with the national average. Leaders have put steps in place to act quickly when pupils miss school. Teachers remind pupils and their families of the important link between attendance and achievement to encourage them to attend regularly.
- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is still above the national average, but has halved in the past year as a result of the actions that leaders have taken. Some children who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not come to school as often as they should, but their overall attendance is beginning to improve.
- Behaviour logs show that incidents of bullying have decreased significantly over time. Most pupils and parents report that bullying is rare, and the anti-bullying ambassadors provide extra help for pupils who are worried. When issues arise, they are dealt with appropriately.
- The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision as part of their curriculum now attend more regularly than they have in the past, and make good progress. School staff visit the provision regularly to make sure that pupils are safe and doing well. One alternative provider remarked about how much they enjoyed teaching the pupils from Causeway School because 'they are always very good'.
- While pupils behave well in lessons, they do not always promote their own learning.

Pupils rely on direction from the teacher rather than having the confidence to drive their own work and progress.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- For the past three years, pupils have not made as much progress as they should across a broad range of academic qualifications. Outcomes have remained low as GCSE courses have been introduced and developed. Where improvements are evident, they have not been sustained or achieved across a wide number of subjects.
- In 2016, too many pupils did not achieve a GCSE at C grade or above in both English and mathematics. Attainment in mathematics was better than in 2015 and GCSE results in this subject are now in line with the standards achieved in English. However, too few pupils made good progress in both of these subjects by the end of Year 11.
- Pupils' achievement in core and additional science qualifications improved in 2016 but declined in the triple science subjects of biology, chemistry and physics. Pupils are performing increasingly well in history and geography, but results in Spanish are more inconsistent. Leaders are working with local primary schools to address this, so that more pupils arrive at the school with prior learning and interest in this subject, which gives them a firm foundation on which to build.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged do not perform as well as their peers across all of their subjects, but are beginning to catch up. A higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieved a C grade or above in English and mathematics in 2016 than in previous years. Leaders have recently improved plans for using the pupil premium funding the school receives so that it helps this group of pupils make more rapid and consistent progress across all subjects.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not achieve as well as they should. An increasing proportion of them achieve a C grade qualification in English and mathematics, but not enough achieve well across a range of other subjects.
- The most able pupils feel challenged by their work. They make more progress than their less able peers, but do not consistently make the more rapid progress they are capable of.
- An increasing number of pupils end key stage 4 with the appropriate skills and knowledge for their next steps. The proportion of pupils not staying in education or going on to employment or other training is decreasing as a result.
- Pupils who are currently in the school are beginning to make more rapid progress, which is evident in the quality of their work. They write with increasing stamina and accuracy, and ask questions to extend their understanding. Pupils can explain what they are learning about, and can often link their work to their longer-term learning in that subject.
- Pupils have sufficiently good literacy and numeracy skills to enable them to access the work they are learning. School leaders promote a love of reading through regular reading in lessons and provide extra help for those pupils who arrive at the school needing to catch up with their peers, so that their literacy and numeracy skills improve.
- School leaders are confident that pupil progress across year groups and subjects is steadily increasing. These predictions are based on detailed information provided by classroom teachers, which is rigorously checked and moderated. The rate of

improvement is not currently rapid or consistent enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress by the end of Year 11.

School details

Unique reference number	131669
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10019428

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	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	678
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Linda Tallowin
Headteacher	Gene Payne
Telephone number	01323465700
Website	http://www.causewayschool.org
Email address	head@causewayschool.org
Date of previous inspection	4–5 December 2012

Information about this school

- The Causeway School is a smaller than average non-selective mixed secondary school for pupils aged 11 to 16. It opened in 1998 and shares a site with Hazel Court School, a special school catering for pupils who have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. The two schools are led and managed independently of each other.
- The school has a broadly equal percentage of boys and girls on roll. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. A low percentage of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, and only a very small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The percentage of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is higher than is typical nationally.
- The current headteacher arrived at the school shortly after the previous inspection in December 2012.

- The school works with a number of alternative providers to personalise the curriculum for small numbers of pupils, on a short-term or part-time basis. These providers include: St Catherine's College, Cophall Stables, Anglers Den, Chelsea Football Club, Chayns Hairdressers and Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club. The school also works with iSEND, which is the East Sussex provider for co-ordinating education for pupils who are temporarily unable to attend school.
- The school did not meet the government floor standards for attainment and progress in 2015.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the range of subject areas, visiting 27 lessons and carrying out learning walks with school senior leaders. Inspectors also visited eight tutor time sessions and an assembly.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, middle leaders, a range of staff, groups of pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector also spoke to the chair of the newly-formed interim executive board and the prospective school-to-school support provider.
- Inspectors and school leaders worked together to review work from a sample of pupils in Year 8 and Year 10 across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors evaluated a range of documentation, including the school’s self-evaluation and improvement plan, governor minutes, the school’s website, a range of policies, child protection records and case studies, teaching and learning monitoring records and pupil performance information. An inspector checked the school’s single central record.
- Inspectors took into account 69 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, including 32 free-text comments. Survey responses from 61 staff and 121 pupils were also considered.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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