

High Weald Academy

Angley Road, Cranbrook, Kent TN17 2PJ

Inspection dates

5–6 October 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	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not had sufficient impact on improving teaching and raising outcomes.
- Governors do not have enough awareness of pupil premium and performance management. They are not sufficiently challenging in holding leaders to account.
- The quality of teaching and feedback to pupils is inconsistent. The use of data is variable and data tracking and target setting in the sixth form is still relatively new.
- The school is working hard to improve attendance but attendance levels are below national averages, especially for disadvantaged pupils and boys.
- Low-level disruption in some classrooms still hinders learning and progress.
- Pupil progress in 2015 for disadvantaged pupils and boys was significantly below average. In 2016, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers was approximately one grade.
- Pupils' proficiency in reading has not been systematically developed and sufficiently encouraged. Higher-attaining pupils are not being stretched with challenging reading.
- In 2015, students in the sixth form made progress that was significantly below the national average for academic courses, although better for vocational courses.

The school has the following strengths

- The principal and senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Staff know how to keep children safe and have all received recent training. There is a culture of safety across the school.
- Professional development is rigorous and focused on improving the quality of teaching.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and the rare instances of bullying are resolved quickly.
- Transition from primary to secondary and secondary to post-16 is managed very well.
- The school enjoys strong links with the community and other schools. Parents are very positive about the school.
- Exclusions are reducing as a result of more effective intervention and close work with families. The working farm is used well to offer respite to pupils who find it difficult to remain full-time in the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, in order to raise pupils' progress, by ensuring that:
 - teaching is consistently good or better across all subjects and all years, and that existing good and outstanding practice is shared across the academy
 - better use is made of available data to plan lessons that support all pupils, including data tracking and target setting in the sixth form
 - pupils' proficiency in reading is encouraged and supported across the school for pupils of all abilities
 - quality advice and feedback to pupils is offered and acted on in line with school policies.
- Improve pupils' attitudes to learning by increasing school attendance rates and eliminating low-level disruption.
- Improve the attendance and under-achievement of disadvantaged pupils, boys and sixth form students following academic courses.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management requires improvement because outcomes are not yet good enough and the quality of teaching is too variable.
- There have been many changes in leadership, staffing and governance since the last inspection. Falling rolls, high staff turnover and difficulties in recruiting teachers have slowed school development. Staff morale is high and the very large majority of those who responded to the online staff survey said that they were proud to work in the school.
- The current leadership team has only recently been consolidated and therefore has had limited time to bring about change. The principal and senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There is a clear sense of direction as well as a determination to improve teaching and raise standards.
- Arrangements to improve the quality of teaching are rigorous and a bespoke programme of support is in place to improve weaker teaching. Performance management is effective and staff are clearer about what is expected of them. Middle leaders have been encouraged and supported to develop their expertise.
- Information about how current pupils are performing is thorough and extensive, but data is not used well to provide individual and group intervention and support. Leaders are well aware that the use of data to plan lessons and match work to pupils' individual needs is variable.
- The curriculum is responsive to local needs and suitable given the constraints of the small size of the school. Developing links with the local grammar school have ensured a breadth of academic and vocational qualifications in the sixth form.
- There is a growing range of extra-curricular opportunities, including sporting and cultural activities complementing the school's enrichment programme. The school farm makes a unique contribution to the curriculum by providing opportunities for pupils to develop qualities of care, confidence, commitment and enterprise.
- The promotion of British values is supported through assemblies and tutor time. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is encouraged but leaders say that more could be done to develop independent study skills and the confidence to persevere.
- The school has worked hard to support families to engage with the school through phone calls and home visits. As a result, exclusions are falling, attendance is rising and there are fewer pupils who are persistently absent. However, attendance levels still remain below those seen nationally, especially for disadvantaged pupils and boys.
- The multi-academy trust has brokered support for leadership, governors and teaching staff. Beneficial links are established with other trust schools to provide support for teachers and consistency for subjects. The involvement of the trust has been significant in securing recent improvements. The local authority has also provided effective ongoing support for senior leaders, governors and the academy trust.
- Responses from the online Parent View questionnaire are very positive and 93% of parents say that they would recommend the school, with similar numbers agreeing that the school is well led and managed.

Governance of the school

- Governance needs to be strengthened further, by ensuring that governors: have a secure awareness of the use and effectiveness of pupil premium and catch-up monies; are knowledgeable about the effectiveness of performance management of all staff within the school; and are more challenging in holding school leaders to account for school performance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Procedures to identify and follow up any concerns are thorough. The school's safe recruitment and vetting procedures of staff and governors meet current requirements. Staff know how to keep children safe and have all received recent training. There is a culture of safety across the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement as there is too much variability across the school. Staff turnover and recruitment have meant that teaching within and across subjects is inconsistent.
- Pupil outcomes, over time, have not been high enough and teaching has not ensured that all pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and boys, make sufficient progress given their starting points. Current teaching is more consistent as a result of a strong focus on learning and behaviour.
- The teaching of different groups remains variable as some teachers do not plan work which is accurately matched to individual pupils' learning needs. Furthermore, in a small number of lessons, teaching fails to engage pupils and low-level disruption hinders learning and progress.
- Feedback to pupils varies across the school, with best practice identified in mathematics and science where pupils are provided with valuable information on what to do next. In other work seen, feedback was cursory so pupils were unclear about how to improve and what to do to improve.
- Senior leaders are well aware of the weaknesses in teaching. Joint lesson observations with the inspection team confirm their understanding of the quality of teaching. Lesson observations, learning walks and work scrutinies have helped them to identify weaknesses for which they are providing training and mentoring.
- The school's programme of training for teachers is successfully contributing to the improvement of teaching and allowing teachers to develop their expertise. The school had already identified weaknesses in lesson planning and the use of available data to plan for the needs of all pupils in the class.
- Links with local schools and other schools in the trust are also supporting the sharing of good practice. These links allow staff to share expertise across subjects where there is only one teacher because of the small size of the school.
- In lessons observed, a common feature was the strong and supportive relationships between staff and pupils which made a positive contribution to learning. Strong subject knowledge was also a feature of the best lessons and particularly noticeable in the sixth form.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' awareness about how they will become successful learners is not sufficiently developed. Pupils have experienced a large number of changes in teachers and, as a result, they have not yet developed consistently positive attitudes to their learning.
- School leaders have adopted a range of strategies to encourage positive pupil attitudes, which are starting to have an impact. For example, transition between primary and secondary, and secondary and post-16, is managed very well.
- The very large majority of parents who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children felt safe and were well looked after. Pupils confirm that they understand how to protect themselves and use social media safely.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and know where to go and who to go to, if they need support. Healthy living is encouraged but leaders accept that more could be done to raise pupils' awareness of gender violence, sexual exploitation and extremism.
- The school has an anti-bullying policy and pupils are aware of different forms of bullying. Bullying in all its forms is actively challenged and dealt with effectively. Pupils say that bullying is rare and instances of bullying are dealt with well.
- The personal, social, health and economic education and the alternative curriculum experience (ACE) programme provide opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness as well as to support fundamental British values.
- This work is further supported through the school's PRIDE (personal excellence, respect, inspiration, determination and equity) ethos. Pupils confirm that this is actively promoted through assemblies and tutor time.
- Careers information, advice and guidance are helpful and supportive in assisting pupils to choose career paths and make option choices. Last year, almost all pupils moved on to further education, employment or training at the end of Year 11.
- The welfare and safety of pupils educated elsewhere is carefully monitored and these pupils are regularly visited and sensitively supported.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The whole-school emphasis on behaviour supported by the 'Ready and Respectful' focus for lessons is having a positive impact on learning although, in a small number of lessons, low-level disruption still prevents pupils from making sufficient progress.
- The majority of pupils conduct themselves well outside of lessons and movement around the school is orderly. Pupils are courteous, helpful and polite but, when activities in the classroom do not challenge or stretch them, their attitudes to learning are not so positive.
- Attendance has continued to improve and persistent absences are decreasing for all groups of pupils as a result of the school's focus and determination. However, attendance is still below national figures. Leaders have worked hard to improve punctuality.

- Exclusions are reducing as a result of more effective intervention, retention within school and close work with families. The working farm is used well to offer a break for pupils who find it difficult to remain in the school. The behaviour of pupils who are educated elsewhere is similar to that of their peers.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over time, attainment at the end of Year 11 has improved so that in 2015 it was in line with national averages. The 2016 results suggest that attainment in English and mathematics is similar to previous years.
- Progress measures are in line with expectations. In 2015, these measures placed the school in the top one third of schools for English and mathematics. The 2016 results suggest that progress will remain in line with national averages.
- However, progress in 2015 was significantly below average and in the lowest 10% for disadvantaged pupils and boys. In 2016, the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers was approximately one grade.
- In 2015, the attainment and progress of the small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was similar to the national average and better than their peers. The 2016 results are similar to 2015.
- Lesson observations, learning walks and book scrutinies suggest that pupils in key stage 4 are on track to meet their expected targets. The school's own data confirms that most pupils are on track to meet their targets in English, mathematics and science.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils making the expected progress is similarly high and there is now little difference between boys and girls. The small number of higher-attaining pupils are meeting expectations in key stage 4 but not in key stage 3. Leaders are aware that pupil progress is less secure in key stage 3.
- Pupils' proficiency in reading is not being systematically developed so that higher-attaining pupils are not being stretched with reading which challenges them. Despite this, pupils are suitably prepared for their next stage of education through effective advice and helpful guidance.
- The Year 7 catch-up programme is having a positive impact on the development of pupils' number, reading and writing skills.

16 to 19 study programmes

Require improvement

- Recently appointed leaders in the sixth form have a clear idea about what needs to be done, including more rigorous tracking of students' achievement and better target setting. Leaders acknowledge the need for higher expectations and greater challenge in teaching.
- Lessons observed confirm that teachers' subject knowledge is particularly strong and highlights the good relationships which exist between students and teachers. Students spoke highly of the quality of teaching in business studies, information technology, mathematics and psychology.
- The curriculum includes a good balance of academic and vocational pathways in conjunction with the neighbouring grammar school. Sixth form students feel well supported in terms of careers advice, work experience and writing applications for

higher education as well as employment and apprenticeships.

- The school works hard to ensure that students are aware of opportunities available to them away from the local area through visiting speakers and engagement with local and national businesses.
- Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe but little real understanding of radicalisation and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues.
- Attendance in Year 12 and Year 13 has been a cause for concern but this has improved considerably as a result of more rigorous attendance tracking. Students confirm that they are happy and feel valued.
- Students appreciate the many leadership opportunities available to them in the sixth form as well as opportunities to support younger pupils in tutor time and the enrichment period.
- In 2015 students in the sixth form made progress that was significantly below the national average for academic courses but similar to the national average for vocational courses. Leaders predict that outcomes this year will be similar.
- GCSE English and mathematics retake courses are offered to those students who have not yet achieved a pass at grade C or above. In 2015, the pass rate in English was well below the national average and the pass rate in mathematics was well above.
- Data shows that just under one third of the pupils stayed on into the sixth form in 2016, with increasing numbers of pupils coming from other schools. Retention rates from Year 12 to Year 13 are similar to national averages and improving. A very large majority of students pursued university education or higher-level apprenticeships.
- The school meets the minimum standards for 16 to 19 study programmes.

School details

Unique reference number	138236
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10012321

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

Type of school	Secondary modern (non-selective)
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	382
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Gordon
Principal	Carrie Beech
Telephone number	01580 712 754
Website	www.highwealdacademy.kent.sch.uk
Email address	enq@highwealdacademy.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 July 2014

Information about this school

- High Weald Academy is a small rural non-selective mixed 11–18 school serving Cranbrook and its surrounding villages. The school is sponsored by the Brook Learning Trust, which is also responsible for Hayesbrook School and the Ebbsfleet Academy.
- The school converted to an academy in September 2012 and the principal took up post around the time of the last inspection, which took place in July 2014. At that time, the school was judged by Ofsted to require improvement.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds with smaller numbers of 'any other mixed' background. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language is in line with national averages.

- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is in line with the national average. This funding is for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after. Eight pupils were also eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding for pupils not attaining Level 4 in either English or mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below the national average and the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is significantly below the national average.
- The school is located within an authority which operates a selective system at the age of 11. Approximately one third of the most able students transfer to grammar schools at the end of Year 6 and a further 10% transfer at the end of Year 8.
- The school roll has been falling in recent years, requiring staff redundancies and a significant increase in casual admissions, with higher proportions of students in receipt of pupil premium and an increasing proportion of boys.
- Two pupils follow personalised full-time courses at the Two Bridges School and Kent Health Needs Education Service. The school also works closely with the neighbouring Cranbrook School, sharing post-16 provision.
- The school has a working farm on-site which supports the curriculum and contributes to the life of the school as well as the local community.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. The school complies with DfE guidance on what academies should publish.
- In 2015, the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook observations of pupils' learning in 19 lessons or parts of lessons, including 12 joint observations with senior members of staff. They reviewed the work in pupils' books, covering English, mathematics and science and the sixth form, to check attainment, progress, feedback and presentation.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior leaders and middle leaders. The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the academy trust, the local governing body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors held meetings with pupils from all year groups and spoke informally to pupils inside and outside of lessons.
- Inspectors looked at the school's website and a range of school documentation, including the academy's self-evaluation and improvement plans as well as safeguarding records and governors' minutes. They also looked at the school's attendance, behaviour and exclusions information.
- The views of 42 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered, along with further written comments provided by parents. Inspectors also considered 10 questionnaires completed by members of staff and 25 questionnaires completed by pupils in the school.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Anne Cullum	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Derrick	Ofsted Inspector

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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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