

# The Community College Whitstable

Bellevue Road, Whitstable, Kent CT5 1PX

## Inspection dates

20–21 February 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Since her appointment in May 2016, the headteacher has inspired staff, pupils, and parents and carers with her clarity of vision and her unshakeable belief that all pupils can succeed. She receives strong challenge and support from the executive headteacher.
- Leaders and teachers share the headteacher's high expectations. They are ambitious for pupils' success. Consequently, pupils work as hard as they can in lessons and achieve well.
- Leaders check the impact of their actions carefully and use this information to make clear plans that are sharply focused on improving teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Teachers use their expert subject knowledge to set challenging activities and ask probing questions. Where classes are taught by non-specialist teachers, pupils typically make slower progress.
- Overall, pupils make progress in most subjects that is similar to that found nationally. Low prior-attaining pupils do particularly well.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils also benefit from opportunities to develop their skills and interests outside lessons. Leaders are understandably proud of the school's provision for, and outcomes in, creative arts.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. They are polite to their teachers and to visitors. Pupils are punctual to lessons and they keep the site free of litter. They wear their uniforms smartly and are proud of their school.
- Overall rates of attendance are slightly better than national averages for secondary schools. Leaders are tireless in their efforts to improve the attendance of the few pupils who are frequently absent.
- Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They work well with the school's proposed sponsors, Swale Academies Trust, who provide very strong support to the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with high prior attainment make slower rates of progress than other pupils nationally. However, differences are diminishing for pupils currently in the school, particularly those in key stage 3.
- The majority of parents voice strong support for the school. However, a small number express concerns about teaching, communication and behaviour.

## **Full report**

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

- Further increase rates of progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have high prior attainment.
- Reduce any remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Provide further opportunities for parents to learn about the effective work of leaders in improving outcomes for pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Since her arrival in May 2016, the headteacher has transformed the culture of the school. Ably assisted by the executive headteacher, she has acted with urgency and determination to raise pupils' aspirations and teachers' expectations. In addition, she has restored good order in classrooms and around the school. Building on these strong foundations, she has gone on to secure significant improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Consequently, by the time pupils reach the end of Year 11, their overall progress is close to that seen nationally.
- Senior leaders' priorities wisely focus on ensuring that pupils make consistently strong progress as a result of teaching that meets their needs. Leaders recognise that disadvantaged pupils and those who are most able need to make even faster progress. Leaders are relentless in checking all aspects of the school's work. As a result, leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and are very clear about what they need to do to raise standards further.
- Staff morale is high. The overwhelming majority of staff who replied to Ofsted's online survey indicated that they are proud to work at the school and believe that it has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers value the agreed approaches to planning and assessment that have been brought in. Teachers also benefit from regular training, which they say has helped them to improve their practice. They are particularly appreciative of the opportunities they have to learn from, and share ideas with, colleagues in other schools belonging to the Swale Academies Trust.
- Leaders have put in place straightforward and transparent systems for managing the performance of all staff. Teachers understand that they are accountable for the progress that their pupils make, and welcome the challenge that they receive from leaders.
- While a number of key appointments have been made in the last 18 months, leaders still report some challenges in recruiting specialist teachers, in particular in science. Consequently, a small number of lessons are taught by non-specialist or long-term supply teachers. However, the Swale Academies Trust has provided strong support for recruitment, for example by bringing in leaders from other trust schools. In addition, the trust has placed a number of talented trainee and newly qualified teachers in the school.
- Subject leaders, and those responsible for other areas of the school's work, play an increasingly important role in driving improvement. They have a clear understanding of the school's priorities, in particular in relation to securing further improvements in the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils, the most able pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Leaders make increasingly effective use of additional funding to ensure that these pupils, as well as those in Year 7 who need extra help to catch up, do well in their learning.
- Leaders are committed to providing pupils with a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum. For example, pupils with high prior attainment are now given a more demanding curriculum that prepares them well for advanced level study and, ultimately, university. Leaders are also justly proud of the strong provision for creative

arts, in particular art, music and dance.

- Pupils benefit from a growing range of extra-curricular activities, educational visits and clubs that help to broaden their experiences in school. Leaders have recently introduced the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, while pupils say they are looking forward to taking part in the forthcoming production of 'The Wizard of Oz'.
- Leaders are keenly aware of their responsibilities in relation to equalities legislation. Pupils are taught to understand and respect the needs of people and groups with protected characteristics in lessons, in assemblies and in many subject areas.
- The Swale Academies Trust provides highly effective support and is committed to the long-term future of the school. Well-established, trust-wide systems for planning, assessment and safeguarding have improved leaders' effectiveness. In addition, leaders and teachers benefit from regular opportunities to engage in training with their colleagues in other trust schools.
- Parents show increasing confidence in the school. The vast majority of those parents who submitted written comments to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, voiced strong support for the headteacher and her staff. For example, one parent wrote, 'My child couldn't be happier at the school and is thriving both emotionally and academically.'
- Leaders have put in place a variety of forums for parents to discuss any concerns they have. However, a small number of parents raised concerns in written responses to Parent View about the high turnover of teachers, unresolved bullying issues and difficulties in communicating with leaders. Leaders recognise that they need to work even harder with parents to explain their vision for the school and demonstrate the impact of their work so far.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors are provided with increasingly reliable information about how well the school is doing. They confirm the accuracy of what senior leaders tell them by visiting the school to see for themselves the impact of leaders' work and by asking subject leaders to provide them with regular reports.
- Governors have displayed considerable resilience and clarity of purpose in the face of the long delay that there has been in the school joining the Swale Academies Trust as a sponsored academy. Although the academy order was issued in May 2016, a conversion date has not yet been agreed. Sensibly, governors have not allowed themselves to become distracted from their vital work of monitoring the school's progress, overseeing the school's finances, and providing consistent challenge and support to leaders. At the same time, governors are in regular discussion with trust executives in the interests of ensuring a smooth transition to a local 'challenge committee' once the academy conversion takes place.
- Governors take their own training and development seriously. Recent training in asking challenging questions has enabled governors to hold leaders to account more stringently. Governors challenge leaders on the impact of funding for disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and those in Year 7 who need extra help to catch up. Governors are committed to the success of the school and readily use their

professional skills and experience to ensure closer scrutiny of leaders' work and to provide welcome practical support.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders, governors, teachers and other staff give the highest priority to pupils' safety and well-being. The school's arrangements for checking the suitability of all staff and volunteers to work with pupils are exemplary.
- Staff and governors all receive regular training in keeping pupils safe. Leaders ensure that this training draws on all current guidance. Governors check safeguarding records regularly, and talk to staff and pupils to assure themselves that all agreed policies and procedures are being followed.
- Leaders rightly impress on staff the need to be ever-vigilant. Staff are confident in reporting any concerns they may have, guided by the phrase, 'If in doubt, fill it out.' The designated leaders for safeguarding follow up all and any concerns that are reported to them. Leaders work closely with multi-agency partners. When it is necessary to make a social services referral, leaders are tenacious and determined in ensuring the best outcomes for their pupils.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Leaders have taken steps to ensure that there is a consistent approach to planning, teaching and assessment across the school. Consequently, pupils in most year groups, and particularly in key stage 3, are making rapid progress in their learning.
- Teachers plan well to meet the needs of all pupils, with a particular focus on disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and the most able. Teachers use their detailed knowledge of pupils' past performance to set work that is appropriately challenging. Teaching assistants provide effective support to pupils who need help to catch up.
- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to provide tasks and ask questions that require pupils to think hard and explain their answers. For example, in a key stage 4 geography lesson on the impact of earthquakes, the teacher's use of questioning enabled pupils to reach a deeper understanding not only of this natural phenomenon but also of different cultures. In mathematics, pupils were given the dimensions of a giant's thumbprint and, consequently, were able to work out the height of the giant.
- Teachers create stimulating learning environments that motivate pupils to do their best. As a result, pupils' positive attitudes to learning enable them to make strong progress in many subjects. For example, in English, Year 11 pupils displayed considerable resilience and scholarship as they analysed a passage of prose writing. In dance, pupils worked exceptionally hard and achieved well as a result of the teacher's precise modelling of skills and close monitoring of pupils' performance.
- Teachers follow the school's assessment policy consistently. They benefit from opportunities to check the accuracy of their assessment with other teachers within and beyond the school. Pupils are given clear advice on what they have achieved and what

they need to do next. Teachers give pupils time to act on their advice. Consequently, pupils are able to say with confidence what their strengths are and what they need to do to reach their targets.

- Teachers take every opportunity to reinforce the development of pupils' literacy skills. Pupils learn subject-specific vocabulary and use it accurately. In English and humanities, teachers have developed a common approach to developing pupils' writing skills. The majority of pupils take pride in their work and look after their books well. They take care to use correct spelling and set out their work neatly.
- Teaching is less consistently strong when subjects are taught by non-specialists, for example in some science lessons. In such cases, teachers' subject knowledge is less secure, questions are not as probing and pupils' misconceptions go unchallenged. However, leaders are well aware and they give non-specialist teachers strong support.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Teachers offer pupils a growing range of opportunities to develop their interests and talents. As well as lunchtime and after-school clubs, pupils benefit from various sporting and cultural events. Some of these events, such as debating competitions and art shows, are organised by the Swale Academies Trust.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop their leadership and self-presentation skills. For example, pupils in key stage 3 relish selecting their best work and making presentations and performances to their parents and other invited guests in termly exhibitions. Pupils are also invited to play a role in the wider life of the school through the 'pupil parliament'.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are taught how to keep themselves safe from a range of everyday risks. Pupils know how to report cyber bullying or any attempts to obtain personal information from them. Pupils say that they trust their teachers and feel able to talk to them if they are worried about anything. Leaders have taken steps to ensure that parents are also aware of what they can do to check that their children are safe online.
- Pupils say that teachers are quick to respond to and resolve any bullying. Leaders' records confirm that incidents of bullying have declined in the last 18 months and are now rare. However, a small number of parents expressed concerns about bullying in their written responses to Parent View.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They believe that their school is a tolerant community that welcomes people from all backgrounds, religions and sexual orientations. They understand why all forms of discrimination are wrong.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school site. They are polite to visitors and talk with pride about their school and their achievements. Pupils are punctual to lessons and display positive attitudes to their teachers and their studies. On the very rare occasions that lessons are disrupted by inappropriate behaviour, teachers deal with it effectively.
- The calm, orderly atmosphere in the school is a direct result of the headteacher's firm stance on behaviour. Clear boundaries are enforced consistently by teachers and well understood by pupils. One consequence of the raised expectations of pupils' behaviour has been an increase in fixed-term exclusions.
- Attendance overall was slightly above the national average for secondary schools last year and continues to improve. Leaders analyse attendance figures carefully, identifying trends and patterns. They communicate promptly with the families of pupils whose attendance drops below 95%. Pupils who attend regularly receive awards in assembly, and attendance rates are displayed prominently around the school.
- Leaders are aware that a small group of pupils who receive support through the pupil premium or who have SEN and/or disabilities have lower rates of attendance than other pupils. Leaders are taking effective action to reverse this. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are frequently absent has reduced significantly since the last inspection and continues to fall.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Published outcomes for 2017 show that pupils made progress across a range of subjects, including mathematics and science, that were close to, or in line with, national averages. Pupils' progress in subjects that they had chosen to study was similar to that seen in national figures. In English, pupils with low and middle prior attainment made broadly average progress, but those with high prior attainment made much less progress than pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with attainment below that found nationally. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving at least grade 4 in English and mathematics was higher than in the previous year, but below the national average. However, pupils with low prior attainment reached standards in 2017 that were close to or above national averages in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science.
- Work in pupils' books shows that in most year groups and across a range of subjects, current pupils are making progress in line with, or above, their challenging targets. For example, in history, pupils make rapid progress because of the care with which their teachers have modelled writing and argument skills. In art, sketchbooks show pupils' systematic development of drawing skills and knowledge about different artists and artistic styles.
- In English, current pupils make strong progress from their low starting points because teaching has improved and the curriculum is more challenging than previously. In most year groups, pupils overall are on track to reach their targets. Pupils use spelling, grammar and punctuation with increasing accuracy. Current pupils in Year 11 write

fluently and explore with insight the techniques writers use to gain their effects.

- In mathematics, pupils use and apply their mathematical skills with confidence, and so make rapid progress over time. In music and dance, current pupils are making progress in excess of their targets because they learn and consolidate subject-specific skills and understand how to apply these skills in their work.
- Differences between rates of progress of disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and other pupils currently in the school are now diminishing, particularly in key stage 3. However, leaders rightly recognise that the progress of disadvantaged pupils remains a priority.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make steady progress from their starting points, but their current rates of progress are slower than they are for other pupils in the school.
- Leaders and teachers promote literacy well. Pupils enjoy reading. They read aloud fluently and can work out the meaning of words they do not recognise. Less confident readers are able to use their knowledge of phonics to sound out unfamiliar words. Pupils who enter the school with low levels of literacy receive increasingly effective support. The school encourages reading for pleasure in a variety of imaginative ways, for example through a reading club.
- Pupils in the school are prepared well for their next steps in education because current pupils now make good progress in English, mathematics and a range of subjects. The proportion of pupils who go on to their chosen destinations in further education or training is close to national figures.
- A very small number of pupils who have behavioural, emotional or medical needs attend alternative provision for all or part of their timetable with one of two local providers. These pupils attend well and are making steady progress on courses that are well matched to their needs.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Outcomes for students in the sixth form are similar to those seen nationally and are improving. Students do particularly well in vocational subjects, where many make very strong progress from their starting points. Students who need to retake GCSEs in English and/or mathematics make progress that is above national averages. Consequently, students are prepared well for their next steps.
- Teachers ensure that students receive high levels of challenge. For example, as a result of their teacher's probing questions, students in an A-level English class made perceptive links between a modern novel and a 19th century poem. Similarly, BTEC National Diploma level 3 science students, including those who are disadvantaged, have made strong progress in all elements of the course, supported by precise feedback from their teacher.
- Students confirm that they get high-quality support from their teachers. Teachers have built positive relationships with their students. Students also say that they receive helpful careers advice, although would appreciate even more support to help them to decide on their individual goals. During the course of the year, students get regular and impartial advice on university and higher apprenticeship applications, as well as on

employment opportunities.

- Students behave well and their attendance is good. They are tolerant and caring. All students act as mentors to younger pupils, supporting them with their work and acting as positive role models.
- The leadership of the sixth form is effective. Numbers applying to join the sixth form are rising. Retention rates are now approaching national averages. The curriculum meets the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes. Leaders are ambitious for the further development of the sixth form, although they are aware that some group sizes are currently very small.

## School details

Unique reference number	118803
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10021142

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
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	744
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Terry Hughes
Headteacher	Mrs Ana Gibson
Telephone number	01227 272 362
Website	<a href="http://www.ccw.kent.sch.uk">www.ccw.kent.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:agibson@ccw.kent.sch.uk">agibson@ccw.kent.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	3–4 March 2015

## Information about this school

- The Community College Whitstable is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- An academy order was issued by the Department for Education in May 2016, with the Swale Academies Trust named as the school's preferred sponsor.
- Commissioned by Kent local authority, the Swale Academies Trust has been providing school improvement services to the school since May 2016.
- There is, as yet, no agreed date for the school to convert to academy status.
- The governing body remains the appropriate authority. However, governors are making preparations to become a local governing body within the Swale Academies Trust when

the academy conversion takes place.

- The headteacher, who is employed by the Swale Academies Trust, took up her post in May 2016.
- Most pupils are of White British origin. A lower than average proportion of pupils are believed to speak English as an additional language.
- Around one third of pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which is similar to the national average.
- Around one in 10 pupils receives support for a special educational need, which is slightly lower than the figure found nationally. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Project 15 in Thanet or the City and Coastal College in Canterbury to receive support for behaviour and attendance or for their social and emotional needs.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 52 classes. Around one third of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also reviewed a sample of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with leaders responsible for various aspects of the school's work.
- The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body. The lead inspector also held meetings with the executive headteacher and the trust principal. A telephone conversation was held with the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff by meeting with a group of teachers and a group of middle leaders, as well as by analysing 51 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. Inspectors also took account of one hand-delivered letter from a member of staff.
- In order to gather pupils' views about the school, inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, spoke to pupils informally and took account of surveys administered by the school.
- Inspectors considered parents' views by reviewing 172 responses to Parent View, including 161 written responses. The lead inspector spoke to one parent on the telephone and considered one hand-delivered letter from a parent.
- Telephone conversations were held with representatives of Project 15 and the City and Coastal College, alternative provision used by the school for a small number of pupils.
- Safeguarding procedures, including those for vetting staff and volunteers, were reviewed.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan, governing body minutes and various policies.

## Inspection team

Gary Holden, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Susan Conway	Ofsted Inspector
Victoria Kirby	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Storey	Ofsted Inspector
Scott Norman	Ofsted Inspector

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