

Inspection of Herne Bay High School

Bullockstone Road, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 7NS

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 May and 14 and 15 June 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

A calm, well-ordered environment at Herne Bay High School ensures that pupils can focus on learning. Everyone working at the school is committed to ensuring that the values of kindness, respect and dedication are woven into every aspect of the school's work.

Pupils who spoke to inspectors made it clear that they enjoy the sense of community. They make friends and most build positive relationships with each other and with staff. Sometimes pupils fall out with each other, but clear processes help staff to respond quickly and appropriately.

Students in the sixth form lead the way, modelling the behaviour and attitudes expected of others. These students are highly ambitious and make exceptional progress in the sixth form.

Difference and individuality are embraced by pupils. Those who spoke to inspectors said that they are all treated equally. While most pupils are happy at school, there is a small number who feel that bullying is not dealt with well enough. Some parents and carers think this too. Swift, appropriate actions are taken by leaders to resolve bullying incidents. However, leaders need to do more to ensure that there is better communication with pupils and parents about how these incidents are resolved.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have worked hard over the last few years to develop an ambitious curriculum that caters for all pupils. A wide range of subjects studied by pupils at key stage 3 prepares them well for key stages 4 and 5, and also for life beyond school. Great care and attention have been given to what is taught in each subject from Year 7 to 13, so that what pupils learn builds progressively over time. The curriculum for students in the sixth form is exceptional and provides a highly structured and rich experience for students.

The school's EBacc entry level is too low, and leaders agree. They have taken action to ensure that more pupils study a modern foreign language at key stage 4. The head of modern foreign languages, along with his team, have strengthened the department and more pupils are now choosing to study a modern foreign language.

Lessons are a hive of activity and are taught well by teachers who are experts in the subjects they teach. There is a positive learning environment. Pupils enjoy getting involved in lessons through independent, partner and group work. Lots of discussion gives them an opportunity to share their ideas and thoughts with others. Teachers are skilled at breaking down learning so that pupils grasp it quickly. Careful questioning helps teachers to check what pupils know. This helps staff to adapt their teaching so that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make good progress. This is particularly the case in art and

English. Students in the sixth form make excellent progress because of the expert teaching they receive. They are supported extremely well and are prepared for later life.

Reading is cherished, encouraged and developed by staff. The calm, welcoming library is full of books that capture pupils' interests. There is something for everyone. Pupils are motivated to read through a range of approaches. Reading lessons, the reading festival and author visits all help to inspire pupils so that they develop a love of reading. The school's librarian is deeply passionate about reading and this rubs off on others. Those pupils who struggle with reading are well supported.

Pupils demonstrate their commitment to the school through positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour in and out of lessons. They enjoy taking part in the many different activities on offer. Inspectors visited the dance club, which was a particular highlight for them. Pupils' understanding of themselves, the local community and the world in which they live is developed through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Despite this, some of the topics pupils learn about are taught later than when pupils need to know about them. Leaders are currently reviewing the PSHE curriculum to ensure that it covers the right things at the right time.

Until very recently, trustees have not done enough to challenge leaders' work. Consequently, they have made very rapid changes. They have ensured that important policies have been strengthened and have begun to challenge leaders with more rigour. Trustees are passionately committed to further strengthening the work of the board of trustees. A very clear and well-thought-out action plan sets out how they intend to bring this about.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

A culture of vigilance and excellent relationships, built through a deep understanding of what is going on for each pupil and their families, helps staff to keep pupils safe. Staff are trained very well about the many risks facing pupils. They know what to do if they are concerned for a pupil's welfare or safety, and take quick, appropriate actions. The safeguarding team is led by a senior designated safeguarding lead who is highly knowledgeable and closely monitors the work of staff to ensure that pupils and families receive the right support as quickly as possible.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Trustees have not done enough to challenge school leaders' work. This means that some of the school's priorities for improvement have not been identified quickly enough. Despite very recent, rapid improvements, trustees need to further strengthen the knowledge and skills of the board of trustees and hold leaders to account more robustly.
- The school's EBacc entry level is too low. This means that too few pupils achieve the EBacc. Leaders need to ensure that more pupils achieve the EBacc to give them the very best chance of success in the future.
- Leaders have not done enough to communicate with and fully engage parents. This has led to some parents having a highly negative view about some aspects of the school's work, particularly bullying. Leaders need to rapidly improve communication and engagement with parents.
- Some of the topics pupils learn about in the PSHE curriculum are taught later than pupils need to know about them. This means that pupils do not have the knowledge and understanding of topics that could prove useful for them at the right time. Leaders should review the PSHE curriculum to ensure that it is well sequenced. They should implement the new PSHE curriculum without delay.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	136465
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10238671
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1598
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	264
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Michael Hills
Headteacher	Jon Boyes
Website	www.hernebayhigh.org
Date of previous inspection	23 and 24 January 2018

Information about this school

- The chair of trust took up his post during the pandemic to replace the former chair of trust, who took a sabbatical. The former chair of trust is due to return to the post of chair of trust in July 2022.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses one alternative provision education provider, which is part of Canterbury Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and design, religious education and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons in many other subjects that were taking place at the time of the inspection.
- Inspectors met with leaders, staff, pupils and those with responsibility for governance, including the chair and vice chair of the trust and other members of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors held discussions with one alternative provision provider, which is part of Canterbury Academy Trust. An inspector visited this alternative provision provider, scrutinised documentation and spoke to staff and pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' arrival to school, tutor time, assemblies and break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised behaviour and bullying records.
- Inspectors scrutinised governing body meeting minutes and records of visits to the school made by members of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator to discuss the provision for pupils with SEND. They visited lessons to look at the support these pupils were receiving.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey. They took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View and comments made by those who responded.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors looked at the school's website and policies, met with leaders and spoke with pupils and staff. They scrutinised school records of the safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school and spoke with members of the governing body. They scrutinised a selection of electronic child protection records.
- The inspection was carried out following a complaint made to Ofsted that raised serious concerns. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. Inspectors sought to establish whether the school's arrangements for safeguarding were effective.

Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Scott Norman

Ofsted Inspector (14-15 June 2022)

Steve Baker

Ofsted Inspector (14-15 June 2022)

Yvonne Garvey

Ofsted Inspector (14-15 June 2022)

Ann Fearon

Ofsted Inspector (24 May 2022)

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