

Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks Alternative Curriculum Pupil Referral Unit

c/o K College, Brook Street, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 2PW

Inspection dates 22–23 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- There have been rapid improvements in students' progress at the school. All now follow at least five GCSE courses, including English and mathematics. The proportion of students achieving GCSE passes is increasing, which is preparing them well for life beyond the school.
- The quality of teaching too has improved over time. It is now good. Lessons are well planned so that the work challenges individuals.
- Students say the school and alternative provision sites are safe places to learn. These are checked carefully by the school. The school's safeguarding arrangements are robust.
- Students' behaviour in and around the school and at alternative provisions sites is good. The students gain in confidence at the school and their attitudes improve because of their rekindled interest in learning and preparation for life beyond the school.
- Leaders and managers, including the management committee, have secured improvements in teaching and achievement since the last inspection. They have raised students' aspirations considerably.
- The experienced management committee is highly effective in holding the school to account and supports well the interim headteacher's vision and actions being taken to improve provision at the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' marking is inconsistent. This is because students' next steps in learning are not always clearly identified; teachers' written comments about the quality of students' work are not always diligently followed up.
- Too many students fail to realise the importance of the good work habit of making sure they arrive at the school on time each morning at 8.55am.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed nine lessons taught by seven different teachers, all those teaching at the school being seen. Two of the lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. In addition, an inspector visited four of the activities taking place at the alternative provision sites on the first day of the inspection.
- A meeting was held with a mixed group of Year 11 students. Meetings were also held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, others with posts of responsibility, the Chair of the Management Committee, and a representative of the local authority.
- There were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). However, the inspectors took account of the school's own records of parent and carer feedback on its work and 15 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors observed the school's practice and looked at a range of documentation, including its checks on how well it is doing, improvement planning, information on students' progress, documents used by senior leaders to check the school's work and management committee documentation, as well as records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

James Bowden, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jackie Blount

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The pupil referral unit (PRU) provides for students in Years 10 and 11 who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools or who are at risk of exclusion. Since the last inspection, the school has relocated to the K College site in Tonbridge and occupies its own block on this site. In addition, there has, until recently, been a significant turnover of staff. The interim headteacher and the deputy headteacher were appointed in April 2013. The PRU is now referred to as a school.
- Students join the school at different times during the year. Currently, the majority remain on dual roll with their home mainstream school, as part of the local authority's managed move arrangements to reduce permanent exclusions from mainstream schools. A few are solely on the school's roll. The large majority of students are boys. The large majority are of White British background, with a few from a variety of other backgrounds. A very few are Travellers. There are no students from families where English is not the home language.
- There are no students supported at school action. Almost all students at the school are supported through school action plus as a result of behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, and a very few have a statement of special educational needs reflecting the same category of difficulties.
- The proportion of students at the school eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children in local authority care and children from service families, is above the national average. Currently, there are very few in local authority care and no children from service families.
- The school commissions five alternative provisions throughout the week within West Kent: Challenger Troop; YMCA Horizons; Hadlow Keith Graham Academy; K College; and Skills for Employability Limited. These provide a variety of part-time work-related and practical courses for students, leading to formal qualifications. These courses are overseen and checked by the school.
- The school has introduced early entry for GCSEs in English and mathematics for the first time this school year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and make it all as good as the best by making sure that:
 - the quality of marking is more consistent in making sure students know what their next steps in learning are in order to improve their rates of progress
 - teachers always check that students respond to comments about improving the quality of their work.
- Make sure all students understand fully the importance of the good work habit needed at the start of the school day and that they arrive promptly at 8.55am each morning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- For almost all students, attainment on entry to the school is well below that of their classmates in mainstream schools and many have been underachieving. This is as a result of disaffection with mainstream schooling. Many have found it difficult to settle comfortably into mainstream school life because of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. However, once settled into their new school, many rekindle their interest in learning and want to do well.
- All are tested on entry when joining the school, particularly in relation to their abilities in English and mathematics. Targets are set for improvement in the important skills of literacy and numeracy and all students are now expected to take at least five GCSE courses, including English, mathematics and biology. Progress towards targets is checked regularly and new targets set when appropriate.
- In relation to their starting points, students make good progress and achieve well as a result of the help and support they receive, irrespective of their special educational needs or disabilities. The targets set for them are strong motivators and contribute to their progress. At the end of Year 11, in 2013, there was a significant improvement in the proportion of students achieving GCSE passes as well as in vocational accreditations at the alternative provisions. Numbers of students not in education, employment or training when leaving school fell; this was a significant improvement since 2012.
- Students now take early entry examinations in the autumn term in English and mathematics. This has motivated them further as they have realised they are capable of achieving pass grades. Currently, just over a third of Year 11 has achieved grades in English and mathematics; many now want to gain improved grades in the summer term. School data show that the proportion of students expected to achieve higher grades in the summer will improve further.
- Good quality teaching and support for all mean there are no significant differences in the rates of progress made by boys and the very few girls, the few ethnic minority students, the very few Travellers, the very few looked after by the local authority or those supported by pupil premium funding. School data confirm that students known to be eligible for free school meals make similar rates of progress to others.
- The most able students make good progress because teachers pitch the level of work set high enough to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- The attainment of students eligible for support through pupil premium funding is in line with their classmates in both English and mathematics at the end of Year 11. The extra resources provided by this funding help eligible students make good progress similar to their classmates.
- In almost all lessons, progress is at least good. There is effective support for developing students' reading, writing, speaking and listening, and numeracy skills. For example, students made good progress in their creativity when writing about Keith Gray's novel *You killed me*. Other students made good progress in preparing for mathematics examinations as they learned the importance of reading examination questions carefully.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching throughout the school promotes good learning for all. Teaching in English and mathematics is good. In a small group mathematics lesson, the work planned challenged students of different abilities. As a result, a less able student showed improved understanding of simplification of positive and negative number operations. In addition, a more able student showed a deepened understanding of how to simplify algebraic expressions.
- The most able students are provided with appropriately challenging work. In a mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher quickly moved a student on to C-grade-level work when it was realised the student was ready.

- Teachers and other adults working in the room have high expectations in relation to students' attitudes and behaviour. They work well together to support individual students and manage behaviour. Consequently, students remain interested and on task and make good progress in meeting the learning intentions outlined at the start of lessons. In a biology lesson, effective questioning was used to deepen students' understanding of the digestive system.
- In many lessons, learning is enlivened by teachers' use of information and communication technology (ICT). In an English lesson, students used laptops to not only produce their work but also to watch *An Inspector Calls* to help them consolidate their understanding of the assessment task requirements they completed.
- Teachers mark students' work promptly and written comments are provided. However, these are often too brief and it is unclear what next steps in learning are being identified. This means students are not clear about what it is exactly they should do. Although teachers also often write comments about the quality of students' written work, they are inconsistent in checking if the students respond to their comments.
- Students also learn well at the alternative provisions. In a carpentry lesson, they were making seats and spice racks from re-cycled items of furniture. In addition, all students were learning enterprise skills, as well as improving key skills in literacy and numeracy as a result of support from the school's teaching assistants who accompany them to the alternative provision sites.
- Students told the lead inspector that teaching was good, both at the school and at the alternative provision sites, because it was not boring and provided a variety of activities to help them learn.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. This is as a result of the staff's high and consistent expectations and effective management of students' behaviour throughout the day. All students know what is expected of them in relation to their behaviour at the school and alternative provision, as well as for visits out of school; behaviour is consistently good in these different locations. Students respond well to the school's positive reinforcement of good behaviour and the rewards they can earn. They respect the fabric of the building and its surroundings and relationships are good both within the school and at the alternative provisions.
- Typically, behaviour over time has varied, depending on particular cohorts of students. There are now fewer instances where students have not been allowed to go to school for short periods of time because of poor behaviour. There have been no permanent exclusions in recent years. There are very few recorded instances of racism, and records show that these are dealt with quickly and effectively. There are no recorded instances of homophobia and no recent recorded instances of bullying. Students' behaviour is checked carefully by staff. Appropriate help is given where any problems are identified and parents and carers are informed.
- Attitudes to learning in lessons are generally positive, which is as a result of interesting lessons and the school's high expectations of academic progress and personal development. Students have a rekindled interest in learning and are pleased with their success in the early entries in GCSE English and mathematics. The group of older students who spoke with the lead inspector all planned to move on to the world of work or further education.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. This applies to both the school and to the alternative provisions. It is overseen effectively by the management committee. Internet safety has a high priority, with access denied to social networking and other inappropriate sites when students are online. Students told the lead inspector that the school and alternative provisions are safe places to learn. They say that there is no bullying and that if there were the school would quickly deal with it.
- Attendance improves significantly for many compared to their previous schools and overall attendance is much improved since 2012. Unauthorised absences are falling. The school has been increasingly effective in improving attendance, including through the use of fixed penalty notices to parents and carers, although there are a few remaining persistent absentees. Despite

improvements in attendance, many students have not yet learned the importance of the good habit of arriving at school on time in the morning.

- Parents and carers report they are pleased with their child's attitudes towards school and how well they feel they are supported by, and involved with, staff should any problems arise.

The leadership and management are good

- The interim headteacher has raised expectations for all and is committed to sustained improvement in every aspect of the school's work. All staff have a strong commitment to supporting the best outcomes possible for all students and preparing them for life beyond the school.
- Self-evaluation is rigorous and is used effectively to plan for further improvements. Teaching is checked by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and members of the management committee. These observations are then used to make decisions about how well teachers are working, plan for training opportunities and to recommend any additional responsibilities. Because there are relatively small numbers on roll and the school has limited capacity in this respect, there are not enough staff to warrant a middle leadership structure.
- Through its effective self-evaluation and improvement planning, teaching is now consistently good throughout the school in most respects, students are highly motivated, and achievement has improved, along with teaching, since the last inspection. The school acknowledges, however, that there are some remaining inconsistencies in teaching, notably in relation to the marking of students' work.
- The school provides a good range of both academic and accredited work-related courses. Expectations have been raised by the fact that that all students now follow five GCSE courses. In addition, there is good provision through personal, social and health education and physical education to support students' personal and physical development.
- The school provides equal opportunities for all to succeed and the extra support and guidance students are given underpin well their good all-round personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Regardless of their circumstances, all students make good progress and are very well prepared for life beyond the school.
- The school works closely and effectively with other schools and with a wide range of outside specialist agencies and other professionals. It keeps dual placed students' home schools regularly informed of their academic and personal progress. Home schools have contributed to teachers' continuing professional development and have supported special projects such as in art.
- The local authority provides good support for the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee, made up of experienced secondary headteachers and senior leaders in schools, provides an effective contribution to the governance of the school under the new regulations for PRUs introduced in April 2013, including management of the delegated budget. It carefully oversees the use and impact of pupil premium funding. This is currently being used to provide extra support to ensure that all students, regardless of their circumstances, make the best possible progress in English and mathematics, as well as in their all-round personal development. The management committee has a good understanding of performance data and of the quality of teaching in the school. It is effective in challenging the school to ensure continuing improvements in teaching and other aspects of its work, including through performance management of staff. It has ensured that good teaching has been appropriately rewarded within the constraints of limited resources and shortcomings in performance addressed. There is a member with responsibility for safeguarding, which helps make sure procedures and protocols are robust and effective.

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	135467
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426049

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil Referral Unit
Age range of pupils	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Kay Rowe
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 September 2011
Telephone number	01732 353730
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