

Trinity School and College

10–13 New Road, Rochester, Kent ME1 1BG

Inspection dates

13–15 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Adequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has an ambitious vision for the school and has successfully raised standards since the last inspection.
- Staff at all levels work together effectively to support pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils make good progress overall against their individual education plan (IEP) targets.
- The curriculum is designed well to provide a range of experience and meet the specific needs of pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning at school.
- Safeguarding is strong because staff know the pupils well. Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure pupils stay safe. Pupils know how to protect themselves from risks.
- Staff have many opportunities to improve their teaching skills and share good practice. As a result, teaching, learning and assessment is good.
- The school has recently changed proprietor. The new trustees have established strong relationships with school leaders.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding. The school provides exceptionally well for the individual needs of pupils. All staff care deeply for pupils' welfare.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the support and education their children receive. All parents who responded to the online questionnaire would recommend the school to others.
- Sixth-form students receive good preparation for their future as a result of an individually tailored programme of study and support.
- The school complies with the independent school standards.
- The school is sensitive to the effects of too much challenge on the well-being of pupils. However, across the school, especially at key stages 2 and 3, most-able pupils do not make quite as much progress that they are capable of.
- While individual pupils' progress is monitored well, governors and leaders are not yet monitoring performance of groups of pupils, including the most able.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise the academic achievement across the school, particularly that of the most able pupils.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that the newly established governing body calls leaders to account for the progress of all groups of pupils, including the most able.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the last inspection, the headteacher and leaders have developed an ambitious culture in the school. Leaders have worked effectively to improve the school. Policies and procedures have been updated and now meet independent school standards. Expectations of what pupils can achieve have increased and as a result teaching is more effective and standards are rising. Sixth-form students who have been at the school for a number of years agree that the school has improved.
- Parents and staff believe the school is led well. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the progress their child is making at the school. Many pupils start at the school after experiencing difficulties in their previous school. One parent summed up the feelings of many: 'This school is led by a truly compassionate head and staff, they take the greatest care in learning what each child is capable of and channeling the child's education accordingly.'
- Leaders understand the specific needs of each pupil well. Leaders arrange daily meetings to discuss any concerns about pupils. Teachers and support staff work as a team to provide the best care and guidance possible. Because of the high degree of individual support, pupils' requirements are met well.
- Staff, including support staff, benefit from regular opportunities to develop their own skills to support pupils to make progress. This focuses on safeguarding and understanding how to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff members also have training, as appropriate, to prepare them for future leadership roles. Staff are motivated and morale is high.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment very well. Leaders analyse the effectiveness of teaching practice. Newly qualified teachers' skills are developed well. Staff readily share strengths and areas of development with each other. Leaders promote an open culture so that staff are supported to improve their practice. Performance management is effective.
- The curriculum is designed to meet pupils' individual needs. At key stages 2 and 3 the curriculum follows the national curriculum, providing a broad and balanced experience. At key stages 4 and 5 the pupils follow a core curriculum, including English and mathematics. Pupils also make choices and follow courses that more precisely meet their interests. For example, a number of pupils take construction-related courses and hair and beauty run by alternative education providers. Other subjects such as the arts, French and technology broaden provision well.
- The school provides rich opportunities for extra-curricular trips and visits, including foreign travel. Pupils engage well with these opportunities. For example, pupils enjoy attending an 'emotional-well-being' club, sharing lunch together while sharing views and experiences.
- The curriculum is supplemented with appropriate therapies including speech, language, communication and occupational therapy. Additional small-group or one-to-one support with specialist teachers increases pupils' rates of progress.

- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. Visiting speakers promote thought and discussion, for example a visit by an Auschwitz survivor enabled pupils to communicate their feelings about historical events. There are other rich opportunities for pupils to speak about their views during specific themed days. Pupils are encouraged to explore tolerance, respect, democracy and the role of government. Key stage 2 pupils explained they had been learning about Parliament. Other opportunities to celebrate diversity are woven effectively throughout the curriculum. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- The school has requested to increase its roll by 10 places to 110. This is due to an increasing demand from a number of local authorities to place pupils at the school. Local authorities have high confidence in the school. There is sufficient space for a further 10 pupils, and leaders have plans to increase staffing to meet these additional pupils' needs.
- There are too few disadvantaged pupils to comment about the effectiveness of the spending of pupil premium funding.

Governance

- The school transferred ownership in April 2017 and a new board of trustees is in place. The new governors have established a strong relationship with school leaders.
- Since the last inspection, the headteacher provided reports to the previous governors about the school on a regular basis. Previous governors provided support to the headteacher, but minutes of meetings do not reflect a high level of challenge to school leaders regarding pupils' progress. For example, analysis of different groups of pupils, such as most-able pupils, was not explored, and trends could not therefore be identified.
- In recent times, under new ownership, governors' support and challenge of school leaders has become more effective, although discussion about trends in academic progress has yet to be developed. Governors are now suitably skilled and share high ambition for the school. It is too early to see the impact of new governance on the school.
- Governors have ensured that the statutory requirements for independent schools have been met.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a very strong safeguarding culture in the school. The school has taken into account current government legislation to produce an appropriate safeguarding policy that is published on the school website.
- Risk assessments are extremely thorough and take into account controls needed to keep pupils safe. Staff anticipate any likely issues, especially related to pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities, that may affect an individual's safety. Excellent communication between adults contributes to keeping pupils safe.
- Pupils explain that they feel safe. Teachers and parents agree that pupils are safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff know pupils very well. Teachers use information about pupils' current achievement to plan appropriate learning activities. Most classes have pupils with a wide range of abilities, and teachers typically adjust learning activities to match each pupil's ability. Teaching assistants work effectively with the teacher to support pupils' needs. As a result of good teaching, pupils receive a highly consistent experience and make good progress.
- Induction procedures for pupils are thorough so that useful information is provided to staff about pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff work together to provide suitable experiences to enable pupils to experience initial success. As a result, pupils settle in quickly when they join the school.
- Teachers assess pupils' work and provide effective feedback, often as an instant verbal response. Written feedback follows the school's assessment policy. As a result of teacher feedback, pupils know their strengths and areas of development. Pupils are keen to improve their work.
- Excellent relationships at all levels contribute to strong teaching. Pupils have confidence in their teachers. Typically, pupils have high levels of anxiety. Teachers' methodical approaches enable anxious pupils to be reassured and they make good progress.
- Parents are provided with detailed written information and regular updates about their child's progress. Parents agree they are kept well informed, as one said, 'teachers' doors are always open'.
- Most-able pupils are not always challenged enough. For example, they may repeat work that they have already mastered. The school is rightly sensitive to effects of too much challenge on the mental well-being of pupils. Nevertheless, at times opportunities are missed to extend the pupils further.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are looked after exceptionally well. Staff make sure that the well-being of pupils is put at the forefront of all they do. Pupils are thriving because of the care they receive. All parents agree that their children are looked after well.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are keen to learn, and they take pride in their work. Teachers provide a very positive learning environment so pupils feel able to express themselves. Pupils recognise others' difficulties and often help their peers.
- Pupils say they feel safe and secure. They are able to explain how the school helps them to keep safe. Pupils explain that bullying happens rarely and that teachers resolve relationship issues quickly and effectively.
- As a result of the excellent standards of care and welfare, the school is a peaceful and calm haven. Parents commented that their children are happy at school.

- A small number of pupils are educated in off-site alternative learning providers. Pupils are always accompanied by school staff, and attendance and progress is checked effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well within lessons and around the school. They are polite and courteous to others, including visitors. Older pupils are excellent role models for their younger peers.
- Leaders track pupils' attendance meticulously and ensure that barriers preventing pupils from attending school are minimised. For example, if a pupil is absent staff carry out home visits quickly so that any concerns that pupils may have are alleviated quickly. Because of the effective measures leaders have put in place, attendance figures are high for this specialist provision.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school at varying points of the school year, with different needs and abilities. Often, pupils have had a period of absence from education immediately prior to joining the school. The school helps pupils catch up and regain their confidence. As a consequence of the high level of support, pupils achieve well.
- Most pupils make good progress against the targets set in their IEPs. Because pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities are met well, they typically make strong progress from their starting points in their social and communication skills.
- Pupils are entered for externally accredited qualifications at the appropriate stage. These range, in the main school, from entry level to level 2 qualifications across a number of subjects. Pupils' portfolios of work presented to examination boards show strong progress. Leaders report that pupils are attaining higher levels compared to previous years. For example, GCSE results and other level 2 qualifications in 2016 show an increase in numbers achieving grade C equivalent and above.
- Work in books and displays across the school show good progress in all key stages. For example, art and technology skills are developed well, with pupils applying their learning to produce good outcomes.
- Pupils make good progress in English. They have opportunities to write for a variety of purposes. Pupils at key stage 2 develop literacy skills well, with specific learning needs such as dyslexia being addressed effectively. The older year groups develop extended writing for a variety of purposes.
- Despite communication difficulties, pupils read fluently to others, including to small groups of their peers. Pupils in key stages 2 and 3 explain that they are expected to read at home. Pupils' reading skills are developed well.
- Progress in mathematics overall is strong. Pupils have the opportunity to learn and apply mathematical concepts to real-life problems. Pupils' problem-solving skills are developed appropriately.

- Leaders have rightly identified that most-able pupils need to make more rapid academic progress across the school, especially at key stages 2 and 3. Most-able pupils also recognise that they could tackle more difficult work, and they say they would like to do so.
- Effective systems ensure that pupils have made good progress by the time they leave the school. Pupils are prepared well for their next stage of education. Most pupils stay on to the sixth form college.
- There are too few disadvantaged pupils to report on their progress.

Sixth form provision

Good

- Sixth-form provision, known as 'the college' was introduced so that students could continue with their education to achieve qualifications and learn to live independently. Leadership of the sixth form is strong. Demand for places is growing.
- Student outcomes are improving and academic standards are rising. Students receive good teaching, similar to the rest of the school. Activities are carefully adjusted to meet the needs of each student. As a result, typically students make good progress in their chosen courses.
- Students are supported well. Teachers know their students' special educational needs and disabilities and ensure they receive appropriate guidance. Leaders prepare them for their future lives well. Opportunities such as travel training and working within the community are readily taken up by students
- The sixth-form study programme focuses on the core skills of literacy and numeracy, and personal, social, health and economic education. Many additional courses are available according to students' interests, including construction, bookkeeping, accounts, catering, media and the arts. Because of the high degree of individual help available to them, students enjoy their learning experience.
- Leaders ensure that impartial careers advice and guidance is included in ongoing discussions that staff have with students. For example, students' career aspirations are taken into consideration when arranging relevant courses. All staff take an interest in students' career aims and help them plan for their next steps. As a result, students feel supported and valued by the school.
- Students are helped to understand life in modern Britain. Workshop days on relevant topics are received well by students. Students feel they acquired an improved understanding of extremism after a recent workshop event.
- The school effectively supports students to continue to their next stage of education or employment. Students become confident learners, ready to take their next steps in education or employment. Recent student destinations include further education colleges and apprenticeships.
- While students make progress in their courses, some most-able students are capable of studying higher-level courses earlier in their sixth form experience.

School details

Unique reference number	132097
DfE registration number	887/6006
Inspection number	10026020

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 25
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	45
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cavendish Education Ltd
Chair	Aatif Hassan
Headteacher	Elizabeth Baines
Annual fees	£18,875 to £19,550
Telephone number	01634 812233
Website	www.trinityschoolrochester.co.uk
Email address	office@trinityschoolrochester.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–22 November 2013

Information about this school

- Trinity school and college provides specialist education for pupils with dyslexia, dyspraxia, and language and communication difficulties. The school also supports pupils with additional learning difficulties such as autistic spectrum disorder.
- The school has recently changed proprietor to Cavendish Education Ltd.

- The school is sited in three Georgian houses close to the centre of Rochester in Kent.
- The school is registered for male and female pupils aged between six and 25 years of age, and there are currently 100 pupils on roll. Most pupils have an education, health and care plan and are funded by their local authority. Five pupils are in the care of their local authority.
- The school has requested to increase its roll from 100 to 110 pupils.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative education providers for part of their education, which are currently Nacro, and Kent Beauty School.
- The school makes use of off-site facilities to deliver physical education.
- The school was previously inspected on 20 to 22 November 2013.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, and a selection of staff including middle leaders. Inspectors also considered 46 responses from staff to the online questionnaire.
- Inspectors met with a representative governor from Cavendish Education Ltd. Telephone calls were held with two local authorities, and a letter was received from a third. A telephone call was held with an alternative education provider.
- Inspectors considered 55 responses to the online questionnaire and a further 28 written responses from parents. An inspector met parents and held a telephone call with a parent.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in around 20 lessons. A number of the lessons were visited jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors carried out scrutiny of pupils' work across year groups and subjects. Meetings were held with three groups of pupils.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents including: the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; analysis of the school's performance data; information relating to the attendance and behaviour of pupils; safeguarding and child protection records; and minutes from governing body meetings.

Inspection team

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