

The Cavendish School

Eldon Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN21 1UE

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The successful development of the primary phase of this all-through school is driving improvements in the secondary phase.
- Senior leadership of the primary phase of the school is very strong. The interim headteacher and deputy headteacher of the primary phase show a clear vision and have led the change towards more effective teaching and learning. As a result, pupils in the primary phase are making rapid progress.
- Children make an excellent start to their learning in the pre-school and Reception Years. They make outstanding progress, due to the high expectations of their behaviour and of what they can achieve.
- In the primary and secondary phases, senior leaders, key stage and subject leaders know how well pupils are achieving. Leaders challenge and support staff to focus on what pupils need to learn next.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use questions well to encourage pupils to explain their thinking. However, there are some inconsistencies in teaching, and not all pupils are supported or challenged to do their best.
- Leaders are ambitious for the school and its pupils. They make frequent checks on the progress that pupils make. They ensure that effective interventions are in place for pupils who need extra help to catch up.
- Overall, current pupils in the secondary phase are making good progress. GCSE results show that, previously, disadvantaged pupils made slower progress than other pupils nationally. Leaders' actions have ensured that differences are now diminishing for disadvantaged pupils, particularly those in the primary phase and lower years in the secondary phase.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pastoral leaders know the pupils well. Strong relationships with staff help pupils feel secure and promote their personal development well.
- Governors are committed to using expertise in primary and secondary phases to improve the school. Their widening skill set is strengthening their effectiveness in holding school leaders to account.
- In the primary phase, accurate and thorough self-evaluation leads to sharply identified priorities for improvement and effective plans to tackle weaknesses. This practice is not as well developed in the secondary phase.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership further, especially in the secondary phase, by making stronger links between accurate self-evaluation and improvement planning in order to have greater impact on outcomes for groups of pupils, with clear means to check that leaders' actions are having the desired impact.
- Improve the quality of teaching and boost learning by ensuring that teachers have a consistently accurate understanding of what pupils know and can do, and adapt tasks to provide appropriate support and challenge.
- Ensure that the actions taken in the secondary phase to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, especially in older year groups and including the most able disadvantaged pupils, have the desired effect.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders are ambitious for the school. The headteacher is increasingly using expertise from primary and secondary phases to improve the quality of education for pupils throughout the school.
- The rate of improvement was given significant impetus by the arrival of the interim part-time primary headteacher and deputy headteacher in September 2017. They have transformed the culture of the primary phase, acting with urgency and determination to raise teachers' expectations and improve practice. As a result, pupils in Years 1 to 4 are making good progress and reversing the legacy of some previously weaker teaching.
- Leadership of the early years provision has been a strength of the school since the primary phase opened in September 2015. Leaders have transferred the same high standards embedded in Reception Year into the pre-school, which opened in September 2017. As a result, children in the early years make excellent progress.
- Senior leaders from primary and secondary phases have strengthened accountability throughout the school by developing systems to check regularly how well pupils are performing. Subject leaders, phase leaders and pastoral leaders come together to review pupils' progress and identify those who are falling behind. Teams work together well, providing support and intervention to help pupils catch up.
- Throughout the school, staff are hard working and committed to ensuring that pupils thrive, feel safe and gain the confidence they need to achieve well. Newly qualified teachers and those new to the school are well supported. Performance management systems make expectations clear, and leaders act decisively if these are not met.
- In the primary phase, enthusiastic subject leaders have benefited from support and training to improve pupils' progress in all subjects, in line with the good practice in English and mathematics. Their creative and determined work to broaden the curriculum is at an early stage, but positive impact is already evident in pupils' work.
- In the secondary phase, faculty leaders show strong commitment to strengthen pupils' performance in the subjects within their faculty. Effective leadership of all faculties is leading to improved teaching across the curriculum. Nevertheless, some variation in the quality of teaching persists between and within subjects.
- Leaders consider carefully how to adjust the secondary curriculum to meet pupils' needs and help prepare them well for the next stages of their education. In 2017, the proportion of pupils who achieved the English Baccalaureate at the end of key stage 4 was half the national average. Leaders have changed pupils' GCSE subject choices to increase the proportion of pupils who study the combination of academic GCSE subjects included in the English Baccalaureate. This includes more disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular provision, well used by pupils, especially in sport and the performing arts.

- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is strong and is embedded throughout the curriculum, particularly through well-designed personal, social, health and economic education lessons. The school's four 'pillars of learning', independence, challenge, engagement and feedback, underpin its values. In the primary phase, each class uses a SMSC notebook to capture what pupils have said and to help them to reflect on how they feel. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain through the successful promotion of British values throughout the curriculum and a strong sense of equality.
- Senior leaders have been slow to use pupil premium funding to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. GCSE results show this group of pupils did not make good enough progress overall for the last two years. Leaders are now using pupil premium funding more effectively to increase the progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school, for example by improving their attendance and providing extra tuition to help address gaps in their knowledge. Leaders are aware that the impact of these actions has yet to be seen, and that this is an area requiring close monitoring. In the primary phase, leaders use additional funding highly effectively to precisely target interventions, which help disadvantaged pupils to catch up from their lower starting points.
- Additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is spent effectively to improve their progress. Leaders make sure that these pupils are given appropriate support to address their learning needs, and their progress has improved this year. The 'Route' provision, focusing on English and mathematics support for secondary-age pupils, has had a positive impact.
- Leaders use the Year 7 catch-up funding well to support pupils who enter the school with below-average attainment in English and/or mathematics.
- The physical education and sport premium for primary schools is used effectively to enhance the range of sports and activities available for pupils.
- Leaders and governors know their school's strengths and weaknesses, but do not consistently reflect their understanding clearly enough in their self-evaluation documents and improvement plans. Whole-school self-evaluation, although broadly accurate, lacks sharply identified priorities for improvement to form the basis of the school's improvement plan, notably in the secondary phase. The whole-school improvement plans lack explicit expectations and milestones for the performance of some groups, which governors could use to hold school leaders to account more robustly.
- Plans for improvement in the primary phase are much stronger. They show precision, clear lines of accountability and evidence of evaluation of the impact of actions taken. Where actions are not fully successful, alternative strategies are used, and this relentless focus is driving rapid improvement, leading to higher standards in the primary phase.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, a very large majority would recommend the school to other parents. Parents commented positively about the progress their children are making, the level of care for pupils and the approachability of staff. The school is oversubscribed for admission into Reception Year and Year 7.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a clear vision for an all-through school to provide a seamless and high-quality education for pupils, from early years to the end of key stage 4. They are rightly proud of the high achievements so far of children and pupils in the newer, primary phase.
- Recruitment of astute new governors has provided a wider range of experience and expertise, to strengthen governance of this converter academy. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and, broadly, areas which could be improved. However, their knowledge of the performance of groups of pupils, such as the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils is imprecise. They are ambitious for the school and now have the necessary expertise to support and challenge leaders effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders' emphasis on pupils' well-being has ensured a culture of safeguarding, which permeates the school community. Safeguarding systems and practices are very well organised. Statutory procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work with children are efficiently managed.
- Leaders ensure that regular training and updates about safeguarding are effective. Staff have good communication with parents and other agencies should they be worried about a pupil. Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident in knowing there is always a trusted adult they can speak to in school if they are worried about something.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching and learning continues to improve, and this has helped to drive up the achievement of current pupils. Enthusiastic teachers show strong subject knowledge and engage pupils well in learning.
- In the secondary phase, pupils benefit from teachers' secure subject knowledge across a wide range of subjects. Teachers generally have high expectations and expect pupils to do their best. Teachers set tasks which are designed to engage and motivate pupils. For example, in geography, pupils were making models to develop their topographical understanding. Where teaching leads to good or better achievement, skilful questioning encourages pupils to develop deep understanding.
- 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.
- During most lessons, teachers check pupils' understanding and respond to their needs, providing additional support or challenge as required. Teachers give effective feedback to pupils about their learning and are generally quick to pick up and address any

misunderstandings and to identify ways forward. This consistency across subjects and year groups makes an effective contribution to pupils' good progress.

- Where teaching leads to good progress, it takes close account of pupils' individual starting points and uses a range of strategies to meet their needs. However, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not consistently use assessment of pupils' progress to set work at an appropriate level. Sometimes, the most able pupils are not given challenging tasks and do not make as much progress as they are capable of. At other times, pupils are presented with tasks which they are not equipped to tackle.
- In most lessons, pupils settle quickly and, due to the consistency of delivery across the school, know what to expect. In a few instances, when tasks are not well matched to pupils' starting points, they lose interest, and this slows their progress.
- Teaching assistants provide precise support and challenge for individuals and small groups of pupils during interventions sessions out of lessons. During lessons, teaching assistants offer skilful questioning to help pupils who require additional support to work things out for themselves. This is promoting better progress for pupils who need to catch up or who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Well-trained staff use a structured programme for teaching phonics skilfully and consistently. For example, in phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1, teachers and teaching assistants checked pupils' understanding to adjust their teaching and to challenge pupils. Consequently, pupils achieve very well. This helps them make increasing rapid progress in reading. Teachers and teaching assistants routinely listen to pupils read and promote their thinking to improve their reading.
- In the primary phase, teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to write in a wide range of meaningful contexts and for different purposes. Teaching consistently helps pupils to use a range of sentences and language features to create lively character descriptions. This promotes good progress.
- Teachers ensure that the wider curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their writing. In science, for example, Year 4 pupils were practicing their grammar when describing the water cycle accurately. Subject leaders have worked in partnership with subjects specialists from the secondary phase to revamp the teaching of some subjects. For example, in art, Year 2 pupils started by experimenting with colours and textures to explore their ideas, before creating their final painting of a mini-beast. This clearly demonstrated how their skills progressed.
- In the primary phase, mathematics is taught effectively. Pupils' books show that the work provided is appropriately challenging and that pupils make rapid progress. Pupils are expected to explain their thinking from an early age. Resources are used very well in lessons and carefully matched to pupils' needs.
- Across the school, pupils' achievements are reviewed regularly to check how well they are progressing towards aspirational targets. Where pupils are not progressing as rapidly as leaders think they should, teachers and leaders set out to identify the barriers to the pupils' learning. Leaders, including the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo), then oversee a programme designed to close the learning gaps of the low-attaining group and meet the individual requirements of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This helps pupils who have fallen behind to catch up and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to progress well from their starting points.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Teachers and pastoral leaders have created a caring environment with high expectations. Staff know pupils well, respond in a timely manner to any concerns and maintain contact with parents as much as possible.
- Pupils said that they feel happy and safe at school and parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, agree. Pupils trust the adults in school and said that their concerns are taken seriously. They said that instances of bullying are rare and staff act swiftly to resolve any issues.
- Pupils told inspectors they know who to turn to if they have a concern. They reported that, on the few occasions bullying takes place, they are confident that it will be dealt with adequately. Pastoral staff are alert to difficulties faced by pupils and offer effective support.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. They appreciate fully why they should not give personal information when using the internet or social media.
- Pupils receive impartial and useful careers advice, information and guidance to support the next stages of their education.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. The school tracks their attendance and progress regularly, working with these providers and other external agencies to ensure that the personalised programmes support the pupils effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In lessons and around school, pupils' behaviour is good, and the school is an orderly, well-organised environment for learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and use the school's behaviour policy consistently. Pupils respond well to these expectations.
- Pupils are polite and show consideration for others. They are punctual to lessons, fully equipped and are ready to get on with their learning as soon as they arrive. Pupils settle to tasks quickly, as they are used to the established routines.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly similar to the national average and is improving. The school has worked effectively with individual families to improve the attendance of those pupils for whom there is a cause for concern.
- Leaders' use of an internal exclusion room had helped reduce the level of fixed-term exclusions. This is contributing to improved attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In the primary phase, pupils' achievement is good overall, and improving. This is due to the high expectations established by senior leaders, exceptional support for pupils' well-being and learning needs, and strong teaching.
- In both 2016 and 2017, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development in the early years was well above the national average. Children make rapid progress from their varied starting points. The school's assessment information shows that an increasing number of children are on course to exceed early learning goals by the end of the Reception Year.
- Phonics is very well taught. In 2017, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was well above national levels.
- Work in books and the school's performance information show that a very high proportion of current Year 2 pupils are making good progress towards meeting age-expected standards. Some most-able pupils are set to achieve at the higher levels, known as 'greater depth', and many are working towards that standard.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 joined the school from other local schools. Pupils in Year 3 settled quickly during the autumn term, and their rate of progress is accelerating. Pupils in Year 4 did not make such strong progress last year. Currently, effective teaching is helping them to catch up and achieve well.
- Primary pupils' written work has improved markedly. Pupils have developed greater stamina for writing. They make more adventurous vocabulary choices and write increasingly complex sentences.
- In mathematics, pupils' basic arithmetic skills are secure. Pupils have opportunities to apply these skills in problem solving and reasoning from Reception Year.
- In the secondary phase, pupils start Year 7 with attainment similar to the national average. GCSE results in 2017 showed attainment and overall progress in line with pupils nationally. However, GCSE results for both 2016 and 2017 showed that overall rates of progress of disadvantaged pupils were well below those of all pupils nationally.
- Progress made by disadvantaged pupils in Years 7 to 10 is now similar to that made by other pupils, although the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 remains below their school targets. Nevertheless, due to improved teaching, a wider selection of subjects studied during key stage 4 and improved attendance, the school expects disadvantaged pupils to make better overall progress in their GCSEs this year.
- Standards are rising across the secondary phase in many subjects as a result of sharper leadership and better teaching. The school's performance information, along with work seen during the inspection, shows that outcomes are rising and, overall, progress is good.
- Pupils' learning in English is a strength of the secondary phase. Careful planning and precise feedback are helping pupils to progress well from their starting points, including the most able pupils. Work in books shows high standards, linked to teachers' emphasis on extended writing.

- Teachers are passionate and are driving improvement across the curriculum, so that pupils' overall progress is good. There are strengths in humanities, art and physical education. Nevertheless, pupils do not always build strongly enough in Year 7 on knowledge acquired in the primary phase.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Leadership and management of the early years are outstanding. The early years leader speaks with great passion about how the links across the pre-school and Reception classes have added to the richness of the learning experiences for children. Staff share her ambition and drive and make excellent use children's interests to provide a varied diet of learning opportunities.
- Teachers use a wide range of assessments to create a detailed picture of each child when they arrive at the school, allowing them to provide precise interventions where needed. Parents are fully involved in contributing to the developmental picture of their children. This coherent approach ensures that children settle quickly and develop strong relationships with staff.
- Leaders use detailed and effective monitoring systems to check that children are making rapid progress across all key areas of learning. Leaders make good use of links with other schools to ensure that their judgements are accurate.
- Leaders use additional funding successfully to target children's specific needs and continually review how well this affects progress. As a result, children who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged children make excellent progress from their starting points.
- Phonics is taught successfully throughout the early years. Children in Reception use the sounds they have learned to build words and write sentences, linking early reading and writing skills effectively. Over half the current children in Reception Year have already achieved the standard required to pass the phonic screening check at the end of Year 1.
- The quality of teaching across the early years is a strength of the school. Teaching staff have consistently high expectations and are determined that all children, regardless of starting points or individual barriers, make strong progress. Around one third of the children in Reception are already exceeding early learning goals in reading and mathematics.
- Early morning work in the pre-school is challenging and engaging. Children were eagerly identifying numbers, letters, colours and days of the week. Work on shapes was linked to everyday objects, and children could readily describe objects they had seen in the classroom and outdoor areas. Staff use opportunities to develop language and communication very effectively. The children are very willing to try new activities, reflecting their growing confidence and curiosity.
- Children in Reception Year also show great enthusiasm for learning. They are eager to take on challenges and explore the world around them. Children showed huge excitement about the egg incubator, where chicks were beginning to hatch. The use of cameras allowed the children to discuss what they were observing. Teachers and teaching assistants used questioning effectively to develop children's thinking.

- Teachers adapt the indoor and outdoor environment well to take into account the needs and abilities of children from two to five years old. In the pre-school, older children know that 'noisy games' are played outside when the youngest children are resting, showing their developing awareness and care for others. In the Reception classes, teachers plan outdoor activities to meet children's interests as well as closely supporting the next steps in their development. Children move freely between indoor and outdoor activities and show high levels of independence. They are keen to take on new challenges, demonstrating their growing confidence as learners.
- Adults are highly vigilant and ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed rigorously. Children are taught how to keep themselves safe and what to do if they are ever worried. Teachers have discussed safe play and safe spaces with pupils, which has resulted in a reduction in incidents on the playground. Children use expressions such as 'safe hands' and 'safe mouth' to talk about expectations for safety and behaviour.
- Key workers in the pre-school quickly develop warm and caring relationships with the children. The majority of children separate easily from their parents, showing confidence in the adults around them. They seek out adults for reassurance when needed, and staff respond quickly to any signs of distress.
- Parents speak very highly of the pre-school and Reception staff. They feel their children are making good progress, noting improvements in communication, independence and cooperation, both at school and at home. Many parents have moved their children to the school from other settings and stated that their children are much happier.

School details

Unique reference number	138475
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10049033

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1015
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Nigel Askew
Headteacher	Peter Marchant
Telephone number	01323 731340
Website	www.cavendishschool.net
Email address	head@cavendish.e-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Cavendish School provides for a range of age groups. It comprises an average-sized 11 to 16 secondary phase and a primary phase, which currently caters for pupils up to Year 4. Its early years provision includes a pre-school, with provision for two-year olds, where children attend full or part time, and a Reception Year, which children attend on a full-time basis.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- A small number of key stage 4 pupils attend alternative provision at College Central, Eastbourne and Sussex Downs College.

- The school meets the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since September 2017, the primary phase has been led by an interim headteacher and deputy headteacher from a local primary school, for a total of three and a half days a week.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 51 lessons across a range of subjects and year groups. Sixteen of these lessons were observed jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, other staff and governors. Inspectors also took account of the views of the 88 staff who completed Ofsted's online survey.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and spoke with pupils in lessons and around the school. They also met formally with groups of pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with parents during the inspection and considered the 163 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent survey, including 144 free-text comments.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, around the school and during break and lunchtimes.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including information available on the school's website and records relating to pupils' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour. Information on governance, including minutes of governors' meetings, was examined. The school's self-evaluation summary and improvement plans were scrutinised, along with records of the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

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