

St Augustine Academy

Oakwood Road, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8AE

Inspection dates

20–21 February 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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal is an experienced leader who is determined to provide a well-rounded education for all the pupils in this school. He ensures that the school continues to improve and thrive. He is passionate about improving the life chances for all. He is well supported by the senior leaders, and together they set the tone of concern and care for all who attend or work at the school.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are carefully structured to match the needs of all groups of pupils. Pupils are clear about what they need to learn, and enjoy many of the activities during lessons.
- Senior leaders have developed the curriculum to enable more pupils, including the most able pupils, to have access to academic subjects. The curriculum is broad and balanced and offers a wide choice for pupils at different stages of the options process. Homework is regularly set.
- Pupil outcomes are improving year on year, and those in English and mathematics are comparable to national averages. Leaders continue to work to improve results in the sciences and to increase the numbers of pupils who study modern foreign languages.
- The council members and the chief executive officer of the academy trust provide appropriate support and challenge to the principal and other staff.
- Literacy development is a real strength of the school. Senior leaders have invested time and resources into ensuring that reading is widely encouraged both within lessons and during tutorial time.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are particularly well served, including those who attend the autism resource centre on site. Senior leaders were able to provide good examples of the impact of their work on the academic progress and also the social and emotional development of these pupils.
- Leaders and council members ensure that additional funding is used effectively to reduce barriers to learning for vulnerable pupils. There is emerging evidence that disadvantaged pupils are rapidly catching up.
- Most pupils attend the school regularly. They are punctual and well prepared for their lessons. However, persistent absence and fixed-term exclusions remain disproportionately high for disadvantaged pupils.
- The staff provide an exceptionally wide choice of extra-curricular activities which pupils rate highly. Pupils also appreciate tutorial sessions and citizenship work where they learn about life in modern Britain, current affairs, staying safe and keeping healthy.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To continue to focus on improving teaching and learning so that all subject areas consistently show positive progress for pupils, especially in science and modern foreign languages.
- To extend the development of middle leaders so they are at the heart of the drive for continuous improvement by providing further opportunities for them to work with other schools in the academy trust.
- To ensure that persistent absence, including fixed-term exclusions, is rapidly reduced by continuing to support disadvantaged pupils who are not attending school regularly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal and senior leaders are ambitious for the school and know the strengths and areas for development very well. They recognise that they need to continually challenge the pupils to aim high in all aspects of development, including academic progress, in order to prepare them for further education or the world of work.
- There has been a strong emphasis on the development of teaching in the last few years. A clear impact can be seen in the way teachers implement the school guidance on lesson objectives. They use a wide range of teaching strategies across different subjects. As a consequence, pupils are often well engaged in their learning. Staff appreciate the time given for continuing professional development. They have regular opportunities to work together in teams to share good practice. Staff feel that leaders have created a climate in which teachers are trusted to take risks and innovate in ways that are right for the pupils. The staff survey showed that the large majority felt well supported and that they believe the school is well led and managed. Leaders and managers are considerate of staff well-being.
- Leaders have reviewed the curriculum options to better match pupils' needs. They have added time to science and encouraged more pupils to study three sciences especially the most able. Leaders have reintroduced discrete lessons for English, geography and history in order to improve attainment in the English Baccalaureate subjects at Key Stage 4. The pupil entries to modern foreign languages remain relatively small, and leaders have noted that it is a priority for the school to encourage more pupils to select a language in the options process.
- In addition to lessons, teachers provide a wide variety of subject-specific support in tutorials which are run at the end of the school day. The pupils are really enthusiastic about the wide array of enrichment activities which they attend on a Wednesday afternoon. These range from creative activities to sports, chess and debating. They also extend to some more unusual offers like weightlifting, horse riding and archery.
- All pupils study religious education and can enter for a GCSE qualification in this subject. Some pupils said how much they enjoyed learning about other religions. They feel that pupils are accepted for who they are, and that pupils are a united community. The broad curriculum, enrichment opportunities, the tutorial programme, and assemblies contribute greatly to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils understand fundamental British values and rate their citizenship lessons very highly.
- Some middle leaders are relatively new to post but have been supported well by senior leaders. They are encouraged to work with networks of other teachers to develop their experience and strategic thinking. Some have been seconded to take on wider whole-school responsibilities to strengthen capacity across the school.

Governance of the school

- Leaders are ably supported by the small group of council members. They also have access to further support from the academy trust. A recently appointed school improvement manager is now working with the school leaders and is setting up closer links with other secondary schools within the trust.
- Council members provide additional safeguarding experience and regularly check that school procedures are robust. Council members are proactive in supporting school functions, and the chair of the council is proud that the school engages large numbers of pupils in vibrant school productions for the performing arts.
- Council members use external support well to provide further evidence of school improvement with termly reviews of the school's work. The actions in these reports are clear and perceptive and provide detailed information on strengths and areas for improvement which are followed up in council meetings.
- Council members oversee the implementation of a rigorous performance management system. Staff are clear on their responsibilities for further improvement of progress for all pupils and how this links with their pay.
- The chief executive of the academy trust brings further expertise in holding leaders to account and has great clarity on the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The trust has supported the school financially to help recruitment where it was proving challenging. A school improvement manager has recently been deployed by the trust to work with the teachers of modern foreign languages and school leaders are pleased with actions to date.
- The members of the academy council ensure that leaders use additional funding well, including that for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds. The staff in the on-site autism resource centre are successful in integrating pupils into the mainstream classes where appropriate. Inspectors saw good evidence of excellent progress gained by a wide range of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, both academically and socially.
- Council members are rigorous in overseeing the strategy for pupil premium and Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up. The development of reading is at the heart of improving literacy for all across the school. Leaders were able to demonstrate some strong evidence of gains in reading improvement during the inspection.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is strong leadership in this area, and communication across the inclusion team is efficient and effective. The two staff with designated safeguarding responsibilities work closely with the school's 'chapter leaders' (pupils of differing ages coming together to grow both academically, personally and socially), and great care is taken to ensure the confidentiality of child protection information kept centrally.
- The safeguarding team has long-established links with local agencies and charities. The team regularly works with other agencies to ensure the safety of pupils in its care. The team is proactive in tracking trends, and identified recently that it needed more support

for pupils who have mental health issues. Consequently, leaders and council members have funded a school counsellor to support earlier intervention.

- Staff have online training annually which keeps them up to date and alert to their safeguarding responsibilities. They know who to refer concerns to and there is a breadth of safeguarding information available in the staff workrooms. The staff survey showed that they believe that the school deals effectively with any cases of bullying of learners.
- The pupils who met inspectors felt that they were safe at school and that they were trained how to keep themselves safe online as part of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme in school. One group in Year 9 commented that the open aspect of the school buildings meant that there was good visibility and that this contributes to the lack of bullying in the school.
- Tutors have a tailored approach to supporting the personal development of individual pupils and this is a strong feature of this small school. Staff know the pupils well, and the personalised approach to ensuring the best for pupils is a strong feature borne out of the school ethos of 'nurturing and enriching each individual'.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The majority of teaching was typically good over the period of inspection for all, including the most able, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged pupils. The strongest practice was seen in English, geography, citizenship, religious education, food technology, history, music, physical education, and some mathematics. In those lessons, teachers had planned a range of activities over time and pupils were able to fully engage in improving their skills and knowledge. Relationships between pupils and the staff are very good and pupils respond cooperatively to instructions from their teachers.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' books in lessons and undertook a review with senior leaders looking at a random sample of books for disadvantaged pupils and most-able pupils. This evidence showed that pupils are proud of their work and usually present their written work neatly and accurately. In the best books, there were clear examples of fluency in written work and higher-order thinking. Leaders are aware of inconsistencies in certain subjects like science, modern foreign languages, and some pupils' mathematics books.
- Leaders recognise that teaching is more varied in some subjects like science where some temporary teachers have had to cover classes at times. This is being addressed, and senior leaders themselves have stepped in to ensure that Year 11 in particular are well taught leading up to their GCSE examinations.
- In some lessons, learning support assistants were working well with individuals or small groups to assist pupils with SEN and/or disabilities. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson inspectors saw pupils being challenged to think more deeply and clearly appreciating the debate with the learning support assistant.
- Teaching in English is often very strong. Good examples of pupils evaluating themes and ideas from a piece of text and then producing thoughtful extended writing were evident during the inspection. In many of those lessons the teachers' excellent subject knowledge meant they were able to enable the pupils to drill down and understand the key features quickly through carefully directed questioning.

- Assessment in Years 7 and 8 has recently been adapted and while leaders have worked with other schools to develop the new system, it is still in its infancy. In some lessons teachers were very clear in explaining how pupils could improve their work so it would move up a category but this was not yet fully in place in all subjects. The principal has, however, been very proactive in ensuring that knowledge tests are sufficiently challenging to better prepare pupils for the higher level of challenge required in the new GCSE examinations.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils work together harmoniously, through the school's system of chapters, and in their tutorial time, and value the experience of knowing older pupils they can seek advice from.
- A large majority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire feel their children are well looked after at the school and that the pastoral support is strong.
- Equality and diversity are celebrated across subjects in the curriculum and all pupils study religious education with an opportunity to sit the GCSE examination. Pupils who were interviewed appreciated how religious education can give them different perspectives, and many pupils mentioned how much they enjoyed lessons on citizenship.
- At social times there are plenty of spaces for pupils to use and they were positive about the food provided in the dining area.
- Pupils reported feeling safe at school, and most felt there was little if any bullying at school. Some pupils who were interviewed felt that there was bullying online outside school sometimes but that the school dealt with it well.
- Pupils enjoyed meeting their mentor at the beginning of the day. A wide range of activities happen during those sessions, including assemblies, silent reading, general knowledge quizzes, numeracy activities, and checking planners to ensure that homework is completed on time. The atmosphere in those sessions is calm and friendly and provides a good start to the day.
- Pupils are usually well prepared with equipment for lessons and take a pride in wearing their uniform correctly. The school council has provided a stationery trolley which the pupils run themselves during the school day.
- There are a wide array of extra-curricular opportunities and enrichment activities which pupils felt were a highlight of the school. This was also mentioned by some parents, one of whom said, 'The opportunities given to our children are endless.'
- A very small number of pupils attend school in an alternative provision. The school has good communication with the provider, and regularly checks attendance and progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour is almost always positive around the school at breaktimes and in lessons. The school environment is clean and tidy, and very well looked after with no litter or graffiti. A small number of parents mentioned that there are a minority of pupils who can cause disruption but that was not usual. As one parent wrote, 'my daughter is thriving in such a disciplined but fair environment'.
- At social times there are plenty of spaces for pupils to use and they were positive about the food provided in the dining area. There is a chapel which pupils use as a quiet area to meet and it is used for counselling at other times during the week.
- Attitudes to learning are positive and pupils were able to explain the rewards and sanctions in place. Pupils are welcoming and happy to talk to visitors with confidence.
- There is a school app which parents can use to track homework, rewards and behaviour points.
- There is an improving trend for attendance over the last few years, and the senior leaders are ambitious to improve further and get above the national average. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is still lower than that of other pupils in spite of a wide range of strategies to address it. There are some good examples of hard-won success for a few individuals who have complex needs but the reduction of absence for disadvantaged pupils remains a whole-school priority.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Senior leaders carefully track progress for all groups of pupils in all year groups. Progress has improved over a three-year trend and was average overall for GCSE results in 2017. Overall, pupils made average progress in 2017, which was an improvement on the significantly below-average progress of 2016. English and mathematics results have been in line with national averages and are predicted to continue to improve. Leaders are aware of the gender gaps as indicated in the progress scores in 2017 and have piloted some single-sex sets to try and address these issues.
- Science attainment and progress have been well below average and although there is now evidence of improvement, this remains a key focus for senior leaders. They have recruited more specialists to replace temporary teachers. A new leader has been appointed for next term to add further expertise and drive the pace of improvement. Both the principal and vice-principal are teaching Year 11 groups this year.
- Current data shows strong outcomes in Year 11 for the most able pupils in English, English Baccalaureate subjects and some of the other options. There is more work to be done in mathematics for those pupils who are now having extra tutorials at the end of the school day.
- Subjects in the options showed much better progress in the 2017 GCSE outcomes. Leaders encourage some early entry in some of the subjects which pupils started in Year 9, like information technology, geography and some vocational subjects. Leaders believe this gives early encouragement to pupils at the end of Year 10 and provides some time for

extra English and mathematics. Some of those pupils can choose another option like psychology where results were strong last year.

- The rate of entry into the English Baccalaureate was roughly half the national average in 2017. Leaders have set about improving this with changes to the curriculum offer in Years 9 and 8, where the percentage entry has increased to 18% and 45% respectively.
- During lessons there was evidence of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities making effective progress. A group of pupils interviewed felt the school was continuing to improve, saying that they were making progress and enjoyed the majority of their lessons. There is a small cohort of eight pupils in Year 11.
- The autism resource centre is available for up to 12 pupils and is part-funded by Kent local authority. Provision is strong, and pupils join classes in the mainstream as and when appropriate. Case studies showed some very good outcomes both academically and socially. A parent of a child with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder noted, 'he has fantastic support from all his teachers and they have great understanding'.
- Senior leaders have rightly focused on the improvement of literacy across the curriculum. Inspectors observed pupils' learning in two lessons in the school library where pupils were making strong progress with their reading skills. Pupils also regularly read and develop numeracy skills as part of a planned programme during tutorial time. The Year 7 catch-up additional funding is used effectively to improve pupils' fluency, comprehension and oracy.
- Current pupils make effective progress across most year groups and in the majority of subjects. This reflects the move towards better consistency in teaching, with improved planning to meet the needs of vulnerable groups of pupils. Disadvantaged pupils are performing better than previously, and progress between this group and other pupils nationally is closing although more work remains to be done, especially in science. Some of the most able disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 are not yet making the required progress in mathematics but extra support is already in place this term to address their needs.
- Careers education is effective and pupils are encouraged to make an appointment with the careers adviser whenever they wish. Year 11 pupils benefit from taking part in mock interviews before they go to college. There are varied activities on offer during the PSHE education programme which prepare them well for the future.

School details

Unique reference number	136923
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10043887

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	632
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of academy council	Michael Reidy
Principal	Jason Feldwick
Telephone number	01622 752 490
Website	www.saa.woodard.co.uk/
Email address	jfeldwick@saa.woodard.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 October 2014

Information about this school

- St Augustine Academy opened in September 2011. It is sponsored by the Woodard Academies Trust.
- St Augustine Academy is a small secondary school.
- The majority of the pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is higher than that found in most schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Governance of the school is the responsibility of the Woodard Academy trustees and their representatives on the advisory council.

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Maidstone Malling pupil referral unit.
- There is an autism resource provision for up to 12 pupils on site.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 38 lessons or part lessons to observe pupils learning across a range of year groups and subjects. Inspectors also visited tutorials and an assembly. The majority of these observations were with school leaders.
- Pupils' views were taken into account in a variety of ways. Inspectors met three groups of pupils formally, as well as speaking with pupils in lessons and during lunchtime. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal and senior leaders, a group of middle leaders, teachers (including some newly qualified teachers), the chair of the academy council, and the chief executive officer of the Woodard Academy Trust.
- Inspectors analysed a wide range of documentation, including the school's strategic planning documents, minutes of the academy council meetings, the single record of recruitment checks, safeguarding information, reports of attendance and behaviour, and records relating to the academic progress and outcomes for pupils.

Inspection team

Beverley Murtagh, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Swan	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Roessler	Ofsted Inspector

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