

# Inspection of The Victory Academy

Magpie Hall Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 5JB

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Inspection dates: 2 and 3 February, and 28 February and 1 March 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The Victory Academy is a welcoming and caring school. Staff-pupil relationships are strong. This means that pupils recognise that the school has 'got their back' and has their best interests at heart, even those who do not find learning easy. Pupils celebrate and respect difference. One pupil summed this up, saying, 'You can be who you want to be here.'

Leaders set high standards for learning and routines, and most pupils learn to follow these. The quality of pupils' learning across the different subjects they study is good overall, and most pupils enjoy learning. Staff strongly promote the well-being of their pupils.

The school rules are underpinned by the 'Victory Values' of respect, pride, belief and being your best self. Leaders' expectations for pupils' behaviour are high. Most staff insist pupils follow these expectations, but a very small number do not reinforce them at every opportunity. For many pupils, the school is the safest place they know. Staff deal well with incidents of bullying, although pupils are not always aware how they have been resolved.

Pupils are encouraged to think independently in lessons. They learn to take on responsibility through extra-curricular activities. Representatives of the student council feed back to leaders and staff every term.

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

Leaders have worked on improving the curriculum in recent years to ensure that it is ambitious for all pupils. In the past, too few pupils took a modern foreign language at key stage 4. As a result, the school fell short of the government's national ambition for studying the subjects of the English Baccalaureate. However, school leaders are addressing this with vigour. The number of pupils studying languages has now increased throughout the school.

Pupils study a wide range of subjects. In each subject, leaders have set out the key knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn as they move from Year 7 to Year 13. This content is logically sequenced so that what pupils learn becomes progressively more complex. The most important learning is regularly revisited so that it is lodged in pupils' memory. Leaders adapt the curriculum well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They get to know these pupils well and build an accurate picture of each pupil's needs.

Leaders prioritise reading. There are regular opportunities for pupils to read. Many pupils arrive at the school with reading abilities that are much lower than expected for their age. The school provides a lot of support for these pupils, including phonics teaching. Leaders recognise there is more to do in strengthening the expertise of staff, to support the weakest readers effectively.

In most subjects, teachers are experts and they use their expertise to ensure that learning is well organised. Teachers typically introduce new learning through clear explanations. Teachers have a strong focus on developing pupils' spoken skills. Lessons provide opportunities for pupils to work together to discuss and debate what they are learning. Teachers' subtle tweaks within lessons ensure that individual pupils get the help they need. However, disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic and challenges in staffing have led to inconsistencies in a small number of subjects. Consequently, some pupils have missed large amounts of learning. The public examination results in 2022 reflected this. Since then, leaders have taken swift action to address gaps and improve pupils' achievement.

Teachers ask questions that make pupils think deeply. These questions also help teachers to check on pupils' learning. As a result, teachers address the gaps that remain in pupils' knowledge. Pupils receive written and verbal feedback on their work. However, sometimes this feedback is not as precise as it could be.

Leaders are taking effective action to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality, identifying that there are too many pupils who do not get to school or lessons on time. This means that they miss important learning. Leaders are working hard with families and other agencies where there are specific difficulties.

Pupils receive regular guidance about their next career steps. Careers advice is particularly helpful for older pupils and sixth-form students. Well-established routines help pupils form good habits that will be useful later in life. Leaders provide many opportunities outside the classroom. These include visits to universities. The student services team supports pupils well with any problems they are facing. Pupils find this pastoral support helpful.

Governors and the multi-academy trust know the school very well. They have invested in additional resources to help pupils catch up. The multi-academy trust has helped the school to recruit and retain staff. Leaders streamline systems so that staff workload is manageable. Staff morale is high and they value the professional development opportunities they have.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is well led. There is an experienced and skilled safeguarding team. The multi-academy trust provides expert guidance and training. Employment checks are carried out diligently. Governors and leaders know the local community and the possible risks to pupils.

Staff at all levels are vigilant. The school's strapline is 'what if I'm right?'. Staff dutifully report any concerns. The safeguarding team has strong relationships with outside agencies and seeks additional help whenever it is needed.

Pupils trust the members of the safeguarding team and take their advice. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, in and outside school and online.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The implementation of the curriculum and the management of pupils' behaviour are not consistent across all subjects. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should ensure the planned curriculum is delivered consistently in all subjects, with staff rigorously following the expected approaches to ensuring good behaviour, so that pupils and students achieve as highly in these subjects as they do elsewhere.
- Staff lack the specialist training to help the weakest readers, and reading interventions are not always matched precisely enough to pupils' needs. As a result, these pupils' reading is not improving as quickly as it should. Leaders should ensure that staff are sufficiently skilled to support these pupils.
- Leaders do not always communicate clearly enough about the actions taken to address bullying. This means that some pupils are not confident that bullying is being addressed and followed up, when in fact it is. Leaders should improve their communication about such incidents so that everyone is clear about the specific actions that have been taken to tackle bullying.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

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

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

## **Further information**

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136108
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	10271245
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,165
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	120
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Gerard Newman
<b>Principal</b>	Michelle Smith
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thevictoryacademy.org.uk">www.thevictoryacademy.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10 November 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is a member of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust.
- The principal took up her post in June 2021.
- This is a large, non-selective school in an area with grammar schools, which recruit many of the most-able pupils. As a result, many of the pupils arrive at the school with lower prior attainment.
- A small number of sixth-form students study some of their courses at Holcombe Grammar School, which is a member of the same multi-academy trust.
- The school uses three registered alternative providers.
- The school has grown considerably in numbers in recent years.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and

engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors first visited the school on 2 and 3 February 2023. Inspectors carried out a second visit on 28 February and 1 March 2023 to gather additional evidence and complete the inspection. The following bullet points outline evidence gathered during both visits.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, governors and trustees, and looked through the records of governance meetings.
- Inspectors met with the multi-academy trust's chief executive officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, modern foreign languages, design technology and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the science curriculum and exam entries.
- Inspectors visited lessons in some other subjects, including science, history, psychology and physical education, as well as registration times and assembly.
- The lead inspector visited pupils with SEND in lessons to evaluate how well they are supported.
- To understand how well behaviour is managed, inspectors visited the school's 'internal reflection room' and observed pupils around the site during breaktimes and lessons. They scrutinised the school's records of rewards and sanctions.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements, including policies and the school's single central record. They interviewed staff at all levels to see how well safeguarding procedures are understood and implemented.
- The lead inspector scrutinised the school's website, as well as the school's own self-evaluation documents.

## Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector (visit two) His Majesty's Inspector

Keith Pailthorpe, lead inspector (visit one) Ofsted Inspector

Linda Culling (visit two)

His Majesty's Inspector

Steve Baker (visit one)

Ofsted Inspector

Mary McKeeman (visit one)

Ofsted Inspector

Jason Philipsz (visit one)

Ofsted Inspector

Sue Bzikot (visit one)

Ofsted Inspector

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