

# The Cornelius Vermuyden School

Dinant Avenue, Canvey Island, SS8 9QS

**Inspection dates** 12–13 May 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management	Good		2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good		2
Quality of teaching	Good		2
Achievement of pupils	Good		2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Leaders at all levels, including governors have successfully established a very positive culture that has led to rapid improvements in achievement, attendance and attitudes to learning.
- Strong teaching over time enables students to make good progress in many subjects. The quality of teaching is improving due to the decisive actions taken by the head teacher and her senior team.
- The overwhelming majority of students behave well and display an enthusiasm for learning. They value the work of adults in the school and are motivated to learn as a result.
- School leaders' work to keep students safe is good and meticulously monitored. Students act safely and feel safe.
- Students appreciate the well-planned activities provided for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These lead to a positive learning environment and good behaviour.
- Students display confidence about their futures. They benefit from good quality support and information, advice and guidance.
- Gaps in attainment and achievement between disadvantaged students and their peers are closing rapidly.
- Newly qualified teachers are supported effectively and benefit from high-quality mentoring and training. This is leading to rapid improvements in the quality of their teaching.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While achievement is good for very many students, it is not consistently so for some including the most able.
- A small number of teachers do not match the learning activities closely enough to the abilities of all groups of students. Where this is the case the progress of students is slower.
- Not all parents feel well informed about the progress of their children. Information provided by the school is not always up to date.
- The work already done to develop an enthusiasm for learning is not evident in the attitudes of a small minority of students. This affects their behaviour and limits their progress.
- Training for some teachers and other adults in school is not targeted closely enough to the specific needs of each individual.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students’ learning in 52 lessons, one-to-one sessions and tutor periods. Several lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors scrutinised students’ work in lessons and in a separate work sample.
- The inspection team spoke with many students and observed their behaviour during lessons, before the start of the school day and at break times.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation including that relating to achievement, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding as well as systems for monitoring and improving teaching and learning. Inspectors also examined leaders’ self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, records of governors’ meetings and details of how additional funding to support disadvantaged students is used.
- Inspectors took into account 72 responses to the staff questionnaire and 47 responses to the online Parent View survey, together with the academy’s own reviews of parental opinion.
- Inspectors held discussions with groups of students, school leaders, governors, teachers, support staff and a local authority representative.

## Inspection team

John Lucas, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Edwin Powell

Additional Inspector

Paul Meredith

Additional Inspector

Angela Podmore

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Cornelius Vermuyden School converted to become an academy in November 2013. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- This is smaller than the averaged sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is just above the national average.
- Approximately 37% of students are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and students who are looked after by the local authority. This proportion is above the national average.
- The overwhelming majority of students attending the school are of White British heritage.
- The school makes use of alternative provision for a very small number of students. The provision used includes Rally Sports, Children Support Service providers and Figure of 8 Media.
- The school meets the current national floor standards which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- To improve achievement further by:
  - ensuring that all teachers plan learning activities that are well suited to the abilities of all groups of students
  - developing the strategies to raise the aspirations of the most able by equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge to challenge these students further
  - building upon the strategies in school to instil a love of learning so that all students work with sustained focus.
- Ensure that information available to parents is regularly up-dated.
- Develop training opportunities to ensure that all teachers and support staff continue to improve their practice.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The highly determined head teacher, ably supported by her leadership team, has successfully created a culture in which students can thrive and excel. The vision of 'respect, responsibility and resilience' is shared by the very large majority of staff and students and has helped to create a learning environment in which students have the confidence to make good progress. As a result, students are keen to do well and often display an enthusiasm in their learning.
- Senior leaders check teaching with rigour and precision. Where teaching has not been as strong, support is put in place. This support, combined with leaders' willingness to tackle any underperformance has led to teaching that is strong and improving, with good or better learning and progress seen in the overwhelming majority of lessons.
- Middle leaders are effective and know their students well and make effective use of the information about the ability and achievement of students to adapt the curriculum which is helping to accelerate progress across the school. In English, the curriculum has been developed to enable students to advance their writing and reading skills, while in science leaders have restructured the Key Stage 4 programmes to make sure that activities are well matched to what students need to learn next in order to improve. As a result, progress is strong and accelerating further.
- School leaders make very skilful use of the funding to support disadvantaged students and this has led to these students making good progress which is in line with or better than that of their peers. One-to-one tutoring is a strong feature of the additional support available to these students, who speak with appreciation about how this programme has improved their attendance, grades and confidence for the future.
- The broad and balanced curriculum ensures equality of opportunity for students. For example, the 'nurture group', for the least able ensures that provision is matched closely to the abilities of these students and is helping them to make good or better progress. In addition, the 'Express Pathway' is helping to improve the achievement of those most able students who are not yet making consistently good progress. Students have access to a wide range of subjects, including photography and citizenship which appeal to their interests and help to prepare them well for their future education and employment. The curriculum is enriched by events such as the successful 'Literacy Festival' as well as by opportunities for older students to work with their younger peers. Students also have opportunities to take part in sporting and speaking events and to visit places in Britain and abroad. British values are promoted through careful curriculum planning in subjects such as citizenship, geography and history as well as by events such as the school mock elections.
- Training for teachers is carefully planned and accurately focuses upon priorities such as increasing the number of A\* and A grades and the development of strategies to improve students' speaking skills. The impact of this training is clear as students speak with increasing confidence when discussing their learning. Newly qualified teachers speak positively about the quality of the good mentoring and training that they receive. This is having a significant impact upon the quality of their teaching. However, some aspects of the training are not as effectively targeted at the individual needs of other adults in the school.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development opportunities are good. Students are able to reflect upon their own behaviours and learning which helps them to make further progress. They discuss issues such as prejudice and discrimination and receive presentations from adults from different social and religious backgrounds and a variety of professions. Subjects including art, photography, design and history provide opportunities for students to explore a variety of cultures with confidence. For example, in Year 8 design lessons students were able to explore British culture through the last century as part of preparation for a fashion show and spoke confidently about their knowledge of British society.
- Students are optimistic about their futures and are being well prepared for the next stage of their education. The information, advice and guidance that they receive, which includes personal careers

interviews, have led to a significant increase in the numbers who want to continue in education. Students speak with pride about how the support that they receive has helped to develop their ambitions to succeed in future post 16 courses and move into employment.

- School leaders work successfully to engage parents in the learning of their children and attendance and parent information events is high. Sessions such as cookery for parents and children help to develop a stronger understanding of how students learn. However, information available to parents is not always up to date and a small minority of parents do not feel well informed about the progress of their children.
- Literacy, including the development of speaking and listening, is well planned and delivered. Reading buddies and library leaders help younger students to read and the library is viewed as an important part of school life. There has been a remarkable increase in the number of students who borrow books from the school library. Students read with confidence and communicate well in formal and informal discussions.
- School leaders have been robust in ensuring that statutory safeguarding requirements are met. Appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place and staff are trained in identifying pupils at risk. The single central record is fully up to date with all the necessary checks carried out when recruiting staff.
- Leaders rigorously monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of the very small number of students who attend alternative provision. This is helping these students, some of whom are vulnerable, to make good progress.
- School leaders work well with other schools and partners. The local authority provides effective support and challenge and also helps leaders to access expertise from other agencies. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching and the progress of students in the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors, led by the ambitious and knowledgeable Chair of the Governing Body, are well informed and have a detailed understanding of their school. They use the regular information provided by senior leaders to hold leaders at all levels to account through precise and well-judged questioning on pertinent issues such as the quality of teaching. Scrutiny of governing body minutes show that a result of this challenge, leaders have improved provision which has led to increased progress.
  - The governing body has an accurate view of the quality of teaching and are robust in ensuring that teachers are held to account for the progress that their students make. The management of teachers' performance is carefully managed and targets are linked closely to issues relating to the quality of teaching and the achievement of students.
  - The governors monitor the school's finances with care and ensure that these are effectively deployed. For example, the use of funding to support disadvantaged students is well targeted and leading to accelerating achievement for these students.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good. This is a reflection of the successful efforts of leaders to promote high standards and foster a positive climate for learning. Adults model the behaviour expected of students, who respond well and behave with tolerance and respect. One student told inspectors that 'We respect all people in this school.'
- Students, many of whom arrive early to school each day, speak with pride about their school and the opportunities that are provided for them. As another student commented 'We like this school and we are proud of it.' They are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the adults who teach and support them. Students informed inspectors that the school provided opportunities to work together that they would not have otherwise experienced. A small minority of students who have previously found it hard to maintain high standards of behaviour explained that, due to the support that they have received, they now enjoy school and want to continue in education after the age of 16.

- Students respond well to the recently completed and well-planned learning environment. When moving around the impeccably maintained school site, the very large majority of students behave well and are polite and courteous in their interactions with other members of the school community. They arrive at lessons on time, ready to learn and often exhibit a confident curiosity and creativity in their learning.
- Behaviour in lessons is good. School records and discussions with students indicate that disruption to learning is rare and this was evident during the inspection. Students want to achieve well and often display an enthusiasm to learn which helps them to make good progress. As a result of these positive attitudes to learning, students are confident to ask and answer questions in lessons which help to deepen their understanding. For example, this was a strong feature of a Year 7 History lesson on Victorian Britain and also in a Year 10 English lesson where students were analysing poetry using complex subject specific language.
- However, there is a small minority of students who do not always remain focused on their learning or work with the same determination as the overwhelming majority. This leads to these few students being off task and engaging in discussions not related to learning and holds back their progress.
- Leadership skills are developed through schemes such as library leaders, peer mentors and reading buddies. Rewards such as the '100%' badges, are valued. As a result, students work well together are respectful and supportive of each other. For example, in a Year 7 music lesson the leadership and direction of student 'directors' helped their peers improve their work and make outstanding progress when composing a piece of music.

## Safety

- The work of the school to keep students safe and secure is good. The newly-built school is secure and students act safely and make good use of the facilities on offer, for example using the 'break out' learning areas to work in small groups or on their own.
- Relationships between students and adults are positive and characterised by mutual respect in almost all cases, with students often engaged in positive and good humoured discussions with staff who supervise them at break and lunch time.
- Students comment that bullying is rare and have confidence that when it occurs it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. They state that they can approach any adult in school for help if they have concerns. School records show that leaders deal robustly with any incidents that do occur and incidents of reoccurrence are low. As a consequence of the carefully planned tutor and assembly programme, which includes themes such as resilience and reflection, students are aware of different types of bullying, including cyber bullying.
- Leaders make use of the effective systems in place to monitor the behaviour, progress and well-being of vulnerable students and that of those who attend alternative provision. These systems ensure that students act safely and are safe.
- Students enjoy school and attend well. Persistent absence has fallen dramatically to a level that is below national averages. This is due to the rigorous work being carried out by school leaders, which includes the active support of governors as well as a high profile rewards programme.

## The quality of teaching

is good

- In the 18 months since the school became an academy the quality of teaching over time has improved rapidly and is good in many subjects. This strong teaching is leading to good progress and a sharp increase in attainment.
- Teachers set ambitious targets for students and most have high expectations that students will achieve them. Students, who know their targets, have developed the confidence that they can and will achieve well. For example, in an art lesson, students in Year 11 were very clear on what they had to do to achieve their challenging target grades due to clear and frequent feedback by the teacher. They worked with

resilience and success to achieve these.

- Teachers' planning takes into account the different abilities of their students and this leads to good progress in lessons and over time for almost all groups of students. In one Year 10 English lesson, careful planning and the sensible allocation of tasks challenged the most able students to develop a sophisticated analysis of a range of poetry. Skilful intervention by the teacher enabled these students to make rapid progress. Students in a Year 11 photography lesson made rapid progress as the detailed personal targets set by the teacher helped them to develop the skills to achieve the highest grades.
- The quality of questioning by teachers is good and in some cases outstanding. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson, the careful questioning of the teacher enabled students rectify misconceptions and then gain a greater understanding of aspects of standard form. Students in a Year 8 food lesson made outstanding progress as the questioning by the teacher and teaching assistants challenged them to fully justify their methods and understanding.
- Teachers' feedback encourages students to reflect on their own learning and in many cases offers precise direction as to how they can improve their work. A scrutiny of students' work showed that in mathematics students are able to successfully improve their skills when solving equations by following the feedback given in their books. In English, students are able to comment on their own work using subject specific language and so deepen their understanding of what they needed to do to improve.
- In the small proportion of lessons where teaching is not as effective, activities do not challenge students and sustain their interest. This results in a small minority of students losing focus and making slower progress.
- The teaching of literacy, numeracy and communication is good in many subjects and helps students to develop their skills in these areas. As a result students speak with increasing confidence, often using subject specific language to develop their knowledge and understanding. For example, in a Year 9 drama lesson, students offered spoken analysis of the work of their peers and were able to relate it to specific genres of performance. This helped them to deepen their understanding of the techniques required to achieve higher grades. In geography, Year 9 students were applying mathematical skills to establish the population density of cities in Europe and were able to make stronger progress.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement is good because almost all groups of students are making good and sometimes better progress across many subjects from their individual starting points which are often lower than average.
- While the Year 11 cohort of 2014 entered the academy in Year 7 with standards well below average, their attainment closed to just below average. The progress that they made in English and mathematics was significantly better than that of their peers nationally.
- School leaders have been relentless in their efforts to drive up standards of teaching, achievement and attainment. These efforts have been successful in improving attainment, particularly in science, French and humanities. Evidence of this was seen in lessons, students' work and academy progress data as well as in standards already achieved in externally moderated assessments.
- School predictions, which have been externally verified, indicate substantial improvements in attainment for the current Year 11 cohort, despite the fact that this year group entered the school with attainment lower than previous year groups and that of their peers nationally. There is similarly strong progress in younger year groups. This good, and sometimes better progress was seen in lessons and scrutiny of students' work and is evident in externally validated assessments.
- Those students who enter the school with reading ages lower than expected for their age make very strong progress due to the effective support that is put in place. On average these students' reading ages improved by 18 months in the initial two terms of the school year.

- The progress of disadvantaged students from their individual starting points is good. In 2014 the proportions making expected progress in mathematics was close to those made by other students in school and significantly above disadvantaged students nationally. The proportions making expected progress in English is closing rapidly with other students nationally. In both subjects, the evidence seen in lessons, students' work and school data indicate that attainment gaps have closed from one grade to less than half a grade. This is due to strong teaching and the effective one-to-one tuition programme, which is helping students to develop their skills and confidence to make accelerated progress.
- Students with disabilities and special educational needs make good progress from their individual starting points, due to the effective teaching and support that they receive. Teaching assistants are well informed about the specific needs of the students that they are supporting. Teachers' effective planning also helps these students to make good progress. For example, due to the careful choice of task by the teacher, students in a Year 9 mathematics lesson were able to work together to calculate ratios and demonstrated the resilience to challenge the thinking of others, deepen their own understanding and make further progress.
- The very small number of students who attend alternative provision make good progress.
- The 'Brilliant Club' and 'Express pathway' as well as effective teaching are helping the most able students to make good progress in many subjects and are raising their aspirations. Evidence of this accelerated progress seen in students' work and lessons as well as in academy data. There has been a marked increase in the numbers achieving A\* and A grades in assessments already completed. These students speak with pride about the level of challenge that teachers provide for them in most lessons. However, in some lessons teachers do not have high enough expectations of the most able, which can slow their progress towards the highest grades.
- The school does not make use of early entry examinations, although it has done in the past, when it limited the numbers of more able students from achieving the highest grades.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140308
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	461673

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	893
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jeffrey Stanley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Carol Skewes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected as an academy
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