

The Canterbury Academy

Address: Knight Avenue, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 8QA

Unique reference number (URN): 136302

Inspection report: 6 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ● ●
Expected standard	● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Inclusion underpins leaders' decisions and actions in crucial ways. Leaders believe that if they get it right for pupils with barriers to their learning, they will get it right for all pupils. They make this vision a reality. This is both important and impressive given the large proportion of pupils who have additional needs, for example those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who attend the school's 3 very effective specially resourced provisions for pupils with SEND.

Leaders identify pupils' wide range of needs precisely and ensure that the right support is provided. Additional funding is used very effectively, for example to raise the engagement, attendance and achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The school takes great care to ensure that pupils with SEND who have education, health and care plans and children in care receive the help that they need. Leaders monitor the impact of this work very thoroughly, making adjustments when necessary. Training for staff is comprehensive and appropriate.

Leaders remove barriers to pupils' learning so that pupils, including those who attend alternative provision for some of their time, benefit fully from all that the school offers. This is particularly effective in the sixth form, which makes a leading contribution to inclusive post-16 provision in the local area.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The personal development programme is ambitious and taught very well. It contains a wide range of relevant topics, including those that are required. Pupils learn about the importance of consent and forming healthy, positive relationships. They know about online risks, as well as the dangers of other behaviours like drug abuse. They are aware of the importance of rejecting discrimination of any kind. Pupils across the school, including in the sixth form, develop substantial and often sophisticated knowledge about these aspects and many, many more. For example, they know about why democracy is central to our way of life. They also develop strong moral understanding and know what is right and wrong. Through specific regular activities, like 'Canterbury Reads', pupils reflect on spiritual matters and consider the differences between cultures. All of this prepares them very well for life in modern Britain, including for those pupils who attend alternative provision.

The very broad wider offer supports pupils' many talents and aspirations. Pupils greatly value the opportunities they get, for example to cultivate their interests in music, drama and a wide range of sports. A number of different leadership roles enable pupils to develop their character traits and confidence, for example as prefects, librarians or sports leaders. Disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other pupils with specific additional barriers to their learning are fully involved in these aspects of the school.

Provision for pupils' personal development and wellbeing is seen by staff and pupils alike as a core part of the school's work. Pastoral support is very strong and pupils receive the right help and advice when they need it. The careers programme ensures that pupils gain high-

quality experiences and that they receive guidance tailored to their specific ambitions. The school's very strong links with local employers and higher education providers help pupils make informed decisions about their futures. At the end of Year 11 and Year 13, the vast majority of pupils go on to ambitious and sustained destinations.

Post 16 provision

Strong standard 

This very large sixth form is highly inclusive. All young people are welcome, no matter what they have achieved beforehand. The unique and ambitious curriculum, encompassing over 70 qualifications and options, meets the extremely wide range of students' needs very effectively. Through leaders' careful checks, the school tailors provision to support students' individual goals and requirements. This includes ensuring that students retake any key examinations if they need to improve their grades, with very positive results.

Although some pupils study more traditional academic and applied qualifications, which are reflected in published results, most either mix these with other kinds and levels of qualifications, or study more vocational qualifications. Teaching is consistently effective and often expert. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged students, make very strong progress through the curriculum no matter what their starting points.

Support for students' personal development is strong, with a wide range of high-quality opportunities available. They leave with great prospects and ready to make a really positive contribution to society. Leaders ensure that students' achievements match the requirements of employers and of education and training providers. Combined with highly effective advice and guidance, the school ensures that the vast majority of students go on to ambitious destinations, such as university (including Oxford, Cambridge and other Russell Group universities), apprenticeships and good quality employment.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils' overall results in examinations at 16 years old have been below average over time, but are rising. Most pupils in each year group are 'middle prior attainers' and in 2025 their attainment was close to average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very high. Their wide range of often complex needs are met very well and they make strong progress through an ambitious curriculum. However, their attainment is much lower than for other pupils, which has an impact on headline figures.

Disadvantaged pupils' achievement is improving and gaps in their knowledge are closing. Pupils currently at the school achieve well overall. Students in the sixth form study a very wide range of courses, some of which are not included in published information. They make particularly positive progress, including the high proportion who retake and achieve better results in GCSE English and mathematics. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils' attendance in recent years has been below average but improving, particularly in terms of levels of persistent absence. This positive trend has accelerated further because of the school's effective actions. Importantly, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils come to school much more regularly, although not as frequently yet overall as others pupils. Leaders have addressed attendance effectively since the last inspection. They have a thorough and very up-to-date understanding of patterns of pupils' absence as well as issues for individual pupils. This helps leaders to take the right action and they ensure effective support is in place for pupils. The systems for following up absence are robust. Leaders rightly identify that continuing to raise levels of attendance is key to making further improvements in the school.

Pupils behave well at social times and in lessons. They work together productively and are attentive. The majority of pupils have positive attitudes to school and enjoy their time here. There is a calm, respectful atmosphere throughout the school. Rude language, bullying and discrimination are not tolerated and leaders address any incidents effectively. Leaders have raised expectations of pupils' behaviour successfully and they make sure that staff have the skills and knowledge to manage pupils' behaviour. The school supports pupils with any specific issues well.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is broad, ambitious, well designed and structured effectively. Pupils' wide range of needs and interests are met through a careful blend of academic study and more practical, vocational, subjects. Expectations are high for all pupils. For example, staff support pupils with education, health and care plans very effectively, so that they follow the same curriculum as other pupils successfully. Pupils gain the knowledge that they need to support them when they leave the school. Provision in the sixth form is particularly strong.

Staff have secure subject knowledge and many have high levels of expertise. Additional support for pupils who require extra help with their reading is effective, especially for disadvantaged pupils. Staff generally adapt teaching well in lessons to meet pupils' specific needs, for example to make sure that pupils secure important knowledge or to stretch pupils' thinking further. However, at times, this is not yet as effective as it could be because adaptations to teaching are not always implemented fully effectively.

Improving the quality of the curriculum and teaching has rightly been a major focus for leaders since the last inspection. They have made key improvements through providing high-quality training for staff, supporting staff effectively to achieve high expectations and checking that improvements are secure.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

School leaders, local governors and trustees all act with great moral purpose and integrity. They put the needs of pupils first and at the core of their decision-making, especially those pupils who face additional barriers in their learning or in attending school. They are relentlessly seeking constant improvement in order to serve pupils better. Staff recognise

this and it contributes to the sense of teamwork at the school. Staff are supported well both in their professional learning and for their wellbeing. Teachers early in their careers make a great start. Staff are overwhelmingly very proud to work at the school. They feel that leaders manage their workload in fair, considerate ways.

Leaders understand the school's strengths and priorities very well indeed because of the wide range of targeted and insightful monitoring activities that they conduct. Since the last inspection, leaders have taken a range of effective actions to improve key aspects of the school's work, like attendance and the quality of the curriculum and teaching. While some improvements have been more rapid than others, leaders' positive impact is clear. Leaders' capacity to make further improvements, such as to pupils' achievement, is very evident.

Likewise, local governors and trustees have an accurate view of the school. They challenge leaders effectively to achieve the ambitious vision they have set, making sure that finance and resources are used responsibly and effectively. They ensure that all statutory requirements are fulfilled and they keep a tight overview of the school's progress.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

This is a highly inclusive school that lives up to its vision of being 'a school for all the talents'. Pupils of all abilities, backgrounds and prior experiences are made welcome and the school makes careful, effective provision for their very broad range of needs. This is typified by the school's large and successful sixth form. The school is a vibrant community in which all pupils are valued and encouraged to aim high.

Relationships between pupils and with staff are warm and positive. Pupils socialise well together and respect each other. Pupils' positive attitudes contribute to the day-to-day ethos of the school. While bullying is uncommon, if any incidents do occur then staff and leaders act quickly and resolve them. The vast majority of pupils enjoy school and feel safe. Staff know pupils well and pupils are rightly confident that they will get the right help with any worries that they have. Most pupils attend regularly and if they are absent the school is swift to follow this up rigorously.

Structuring their work around their 'four pillars of excellence' of sport, practical and enterprise education, the performing arts and academic subjects, staff have high expectations of pupils and support pupils to realise their aspirations. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with other barriers to their learning, go on to ambitious destinations when they leave school. Teachers generally address pupils' specific needs effectively in lessons, particularly in the sixth form. Pupils broaden their horizons and develop their skills through a wide range of high-quality experiences at the school, both in and beyond the curriculum. The school teaches pupils to be independent and resilient. Many pupils are highly motivated to challenge themselves to achieve their best. They are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders should further ensure that all pupils' needs are met fully over time so that they achieve highly, including in national tests and examinations.
 - Leaders should continue to increase rates of attendance, including for pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
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About this inspection

This school is part of The Canterbury Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Jon Watson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mark Johnstone.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OI) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the CEO and other senior leaders during the inspection. They also met with trustees and local governors. Inspectors met with a wide range of other leaders and members of staff and also spoke to a representative of the local authority. The inspection team gathered the views of staff and a very wide range of pupils throughout the inspection. Inspectors reviewed the school's own records and documents, including for safeguarding. The inspection team made visits to lessons and reviewed pupils' work. An Inspector also visited City and Coastal College, part of the Canterbury Inclusion Service run by the Canterbury Academy Trust.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

There have been several new key leadership appointments since the last inspection, including the head of school.

The school includes provision for a significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities with education, health and care plans. This proportion is about double the national average. The school's provision includes 3 specially resourced provisions to meet these pupils' requirements. The main areas of need are autism, hearing impairment and speech, language and communication.

The school makes use of 2 alternative provisions, including one that is unregistered which The Canterbury Academy Trust runs and which caters for pupils from across the local area.

Head of School: Mrs Sarah Morgan

Lead inspector:

Matthew Haynes, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Michelle Payne, His Majesty's Inspector

Alex Hayes, Ofsted Inspector

Alexandra Aldridge-Gibbons, His Majesty's Inspector

Michelle Lawson, Ofsted Inspector

Philip Wayne, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 6 January 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

1,984

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,300

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

33.97%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

7.46%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

11.79%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

HI - Hearing Impairment, SLCN - Speech, language and Communication, ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	33.6%	45.2%	Below
2023/24 (final)	30.2%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	30.8%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	39.0	45.9	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	38.0	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	38.7	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.67	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.55	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	18.3%	25.6%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	18.1%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	22.2%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	31.9	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	31.2	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	34.2	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-1.16	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.87	-0.57	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	18.3%	52.8%	-34.5 pp
2023/24 (final)	18.1%	53.1%	-35.1 pp
2022/23 (final)	22.2%	52.4%	-30.2 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	31.9	50.3	-18.4
2023/24 (final)	31.2	50.0	-18.8
2022/23 (final)	34.2	50.3	-16.1

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-1.16	0.16	-1.32
2022/23 (final)	-0.87	0.17	-1.03

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	89%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	93%	93%	Average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2021 leavers (revised)	95%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	26.59	34.99	Below
2023/24 (final)	24.70	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	25.98	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	-0.3	0.0	Below
2023/24 (revised)	-0.2	0.0	Below

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	10.7%	8.1%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.1%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	12.8%	9.0%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	28.9%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	38.0%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	37.5%	26.5%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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