

Inspection of The Gordon Children's Academy, Junior

Gordon Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 3HQ

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils strive to embody Gordon's 'great expectations' and be their best selves. Leaders put children first. Pupils know they must behave, and appreciate how leaders teach rules and routines to everyone. Around school, pupils are merry and friendly to one another. They are well informed about reporting any concerns about bullying. Pupils smile and know not to be unkind. All of this contributes strongly to pupils feeling safe.

The curriculum helps pupils think in different ways. This helps them to explore the wider world around them. Because of this, pupils demonstrate responsibility, encouragement, and a can-do belief. This might be combatting climate change, challenging stereotypes or showing compassion for refugees. Pupils are encouraged to think inclusively about others and to use their voice for the good of all.

Pupils are motivated to learn. They enjoy studying new knowledge and hope that they reach the top of the daily behaviour ladder. They strive to earn rewards, including the chance to wear a coveted 'golden' tie.

Leaders provide many different enriching experiences for pupils, from memorable community events and celebrating people's true colours to learning about the medical profession from a well-known doctor. Pupils value these opportunities and the support they receive at Gordon.

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

The headteacher has focused on making crucial changes which have been instrumental for the learning of pupils and staff. There is a school culture where everyone knows what is expected. Teachers are clear about their core role and applaud the professional training the trust provides.

Leaders have spent valuable time scrutinising the effectiveness of the school's curriculum. Previously, pupils were unclear about what they were learning in each different subject. Now, leaders have identified the salient knowledge for units within subjects. This knowledge is ordered in a way so that pupils remember it. Furthermore, deliberate links between topics are planned. This helps pupils gain a deeper understanding of ideas and concepts. But leaders recognise this is still a work in progress, with some subject development yet to be completed.

The trust has galvanised teachers' subject knowledge and approaches to curriculum delivery. Leaders work with teachers to find effective ways to help pupils learn. An example of this is how teachers continue revisiting previous learning to strengthen pupils' memory of what they remember. Teachers skilfully weave in time for pupils to retrieve information. Beyond this, however, there are still some inconsistencies in the teaching of the curriculum. Teachers can lose sight of the intended knowledge pupils need to master. This can happen in teachers' activity choices which are sometimes not as closely matched to the planned curriculum as they could be.

Leaders quickly identify the needs of pupils as soon as they join the school. This ensures any pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the help they need. Parents are closely involved in their children's development. In lessons, adults ensure that specific adaptations are in place where necessary. Aspirations are high, meaning pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum content as their classmates.

Pupils' reading and vocabulary are of utmost importance. Teachers ensure that pupils read aloud daily in lessons to develop fluency. Staff have received training in using a rigorous phonics programme. When pupils start in Year 3, leaders double check if they have any gaps in phonics knowledge. However, teachers' assessments in reading and some other subjects do not always provide the right information. It means some additional interventions do not always help pupils quickly remedy any gaps in their learning.

Classrooms are calm places for pupils to learn. Leaders have ensured good behaviour by breaking routines into small steps for pupils to learn and understand. Regular practice of this helps pupils build excellent habits. Pupils speak passionately about equalities. They talk openly about mental health and know how physical activity boosts their positivity.

Trustees hold leaders firmly to account. Governors at regional and local level know which duties they must undertake. Trustees utilise external quality assurances to double check what leaders say.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders adopt a vigilant safeguarding culture. They train staff well in what to spot and how to share concerns. Staff know safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and record any worries quickly and clearly. Leaders respond straight away, explaining their thinking and what will happen next. Leaders meet regularly to discuss cases and actions. Governors ensure they probe safeguarding continually. They do their own 'temperature checks' in talking to pupils and staff about pupils' safety and well-being.

Pupils learn different ways to keep safe. They understand what cyber-bullying is and are confident to report it if it happens outside of school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all subjects outline exactly what pupils need to know and the appropriate sequence for this. Therefore, pupils do not learn enough of the right knowledge to prepare them for secondary school. Leaders need to complete their work of

checking that component knowledge builds successfully to the ambitious end points of Year 6.

- Teachers' subject and pedagogical content knowledge is not consistently strong. It can lead to teachers unsure about the best ways to implement the ambitious curriculum. Leaders should continue with upskilling teachers to deliver the curriculum in a highly effective way.
- Teachers' checks of pupils' knowledge are not well embedded across the curriculum. Sometimes, assessment practices are not pinpointing exactly what knowledge gaps pupils might have. Leaders need to ensure that the assessment of what pupils know and remember is closely matched to the taught curriculum.

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

Unique reference number	140606
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10245132
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	321
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gerard Newman
Headteacher	Kirstie Jones
Website	www.gordonchildrensacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 February 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Gordon Children’s Academy, Junior is part of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust. Since the last inspection, there is a new senior leadership team. The headteacher joined the school in November 2021. She is executive headteacher of the three primary schools in the trust’s Strood hub.
- Both the federated junior and infant schools were inspected at the same time. This was with different inspection teams.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the trust’s chief executive and a director of education.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and religious education. To do this, they met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils’ work.
- Pupils across the school were observed reading to a familiar adult by the lead inspector.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads to examine records and actions. This included sampling a range of safeguarding documentation. He also spoke with an education officer from the local authority. A team inspector reviewed checks on the safer recruitment of adults.
- Inspectors talked to pupils from different year groups about their learning and experiences at school.
- The views of staff, pupils and parents were gathered through discussions and Ofsted’s online surveys.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. This included leaders’ self-evaluation and school development priorities; policies; curriculum documents; published information about pupils’ performance; pupil premium strategy; and minutes of the board of trustees, regional governing body and the academy advisory board meetings.

Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Alice Early	Ofsted Inspector
Neil Small	Ofsted Inspector

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