

The Maplesden Noakes School

Buckland Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 0TJ

Inspection dates 25–26 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well. In Years 7 to 11, students make good progress; they achieve better than expected GCSE grades at the end of Year 11.
- Teaching is typically good. Teachers are enthusiastic, have secure subject knowledge and high expectations. They adapt work well to meet individual students' needs.
- Students are enthusiastic about school life, behave well and come to lessons ready to learn.
- The sixth form is good and a real strength of the school. Over the past two years its popularity has increased and students' progress has improved. Much teaching in the sixth form is outstanding.
- In recent years the headteacher's outstanding leadership has skilfully and effectively developed leadership capacity at all levels. Increasingly effective middle leaders have played a major role in raising achievement over the past year.
- Governors are very active in providing challenge and support to the headteacher and the senior leadership team.
- Students, parents and staff are very positive about the school. Students have a real voice through the school council and the school works hard to get parents involved. Staff morale is high; many comment on how much they enjoy working at the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some students, particularly in Years 7 and 8, do not read and write well and the support they receive to improve is not intensive enough for them all to make rapid progress.
- In some lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4, teachers do not give more able students challenging enough work for them to reach their full potential.
- The achievement of students for whom the student premium provides support does not yet match that of other students in the school, although the gap is being reduced.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 40 lessons, some of which were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, pastoral leaders and various groups of students. A meeting was also held with the Vice-Chair of Governing Body.
- Inspectors observed students and spoke to them around the school at break and at lunch times.
- Inspectors took account of 126 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) and 38 staff questionnaire responses.
- School policies and school records, including analysis of the 2013 examination results, were scrutinised, along with samples of students' work from the previous academic year. A range of documentation relating to safeguarding and child protection was examined.
- A representative of the local authority attended the final meeting at the end of the inspection.

Inspection team

Steve Williams, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Clare Gillies	Additional Inspector
Lyn Riley	Additional Inspector
Noureddin Khassal	Additional Inspector
Andrew Lyons	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Maplesden Noakes School converted to an academy school in February 2012. When its predecessor school, with the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- It is an average-sized school in an area where a significant proportion of students go to local grammar schools. It is a specialist business and enterprise college.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action is well below the national average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The most common needs relate to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Less than one in 10 students is from minority ethnic groups, which is well below the national average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for specific groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and children from service families) is average. There are no service family children in the school.
- A relatively high proportion of Year 7 students is eligible for catch-up funding which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The Green Room makes provision for students with disabilities and special educational needs and includes specialist support for a small number of students who have statements of special educational needs for hearing impairment. These students spend most of their time, with support, in mainstream classes.
- Five students from Years 10 and 11 are educated off site at West Kent Skills Centre. A further five students from Years 9, 10 and 11 are educated off site at the West Kent Health Needs Hospital School.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by helping teachers to:
 - make sure that all students in their classes, including the more able, make rapid progress and present their work well
 - reduce further the gap between the achievement of pupil premium students and others
 - develop the imaginative use of technology to make learning more stimulating and enjoyable
 - learn from their colleagues' best practice.
- Improve standards of literacy by:
 - intensifying the programme of support for students who enter the school with low standards of reading and writing
 - strengthening opportunities for students to develop their literacy through all elements of school life.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students' attainment on entry to the school is well below the national average and by the end of Year 11 students achieve GCSE results broadly in line with the national average. This is as a result of good teaching and high expectations. Between the end of primary school and Year 11, more students make the expected progress than the national average in English, and the proportion making the expected progress in mathematics is improving.
- Students start sixth form courses with GCSE grades below the average for sixth form students nationally. Although the proportion who secure A level grades A* to B is below average, almost all students pass their A-level examinations.
- Sixth form results have steadily improved in the last few years and 95% of Year 12 students stay on into Year 13, a much higher percentage than do nationally. This level of success is because sixth form teaching is good and often outstanding, augmented by good support and guidance from tutors.
- Students make good progress in both English and mathematics, but more able students' progress in mathematics is below the national average. Students who start school with very low standards of reading and writing make less progress than their peers and do not receive enough support to make rapid progress.
- The school closely monitors the achievement of students attending off-site provision; their progress is in line with the school's expectations.
- Year 11 students who sat their English GCSE in January, with one exception, improved their grades when they retook the examination in June.
- Students with disabilities and special educational needs, Year 7 catch-up students and those for whom the school receives the pupil premium make good progress. Hearing impaired students are fully integrated into all aspects of school life and make as good progress as others.
- The school monitors particularly closely the attainment and progress of students eligible for the pupil premium. Although their GCSE grades in English and mathematics are about a grade lower than other students, this gap is less than seen nationally and their attainment is improving faster than the others.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is characterised by high expectations, good classroom relationships and well planned lessons. Students respect their teachers and want to do well. As a result, students in Years 7 to 11 are almost always ready to learn and, in the sixth form, students have a very mature approach to their studies.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge which they use well in their teaching and they know how to prepare students for examinations. This fosters the confidence of students that they can succeed.
- Teaching assistants frequently provide good support to students in the classroom. They ensure that hearing impaired students start their day well so that they can join in all lessons.
- When students learn really well they are inspired to become confident learners and progress rapidly because teachers maintain a rapid pace, provide good feedback and use information from their marking to help students to move forward. In a Year 7 Spanish lesson where teaching was outstanding, students made very rapid progress and spoke confidently in Spanish after only three weeks of studying the language. The teacher skilfully built on information gained from marking students' work and shaped and adapted tasks as the lesson unfolded.
- Much of the teaching in the sixth form is outstanding, fostering in students a sense of curiosity and a real thirst for learning. Teaching is highly effective in honing skills of students so they become independent learners, ready for the next stage in their education or training. In a sixth form business studies lesson, students could show how the teacher's marking and careful

guidance had helped them to improve their work and take the next steps in learning.

- In lessons which are less effective, teaching lacks pace and energy, assessment is weak and work is not tailored to individual student needs and does not take account of their different starting points.
- There are examples of effective and creative use of technology in the classroom, for example in English and modern foreign languages; but, on occasions, opportunities to make effective and judicious use of technology to enrich and accelerate learning are missed.
- In some lessons, teachers cannot focus enough on students' reading, writing and spelling when they have a large number of students with low literacy skills in the class. This is particularly evident when there is limited support from teaching assistants.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe. They show a clear awareness of e-safety, and are aware of cyber bullying and how it can be prevented. Sixth form students value a hard-hitting study day they have on driving and road safety.
- Behaviour is well managed by teachers in classrooms and around the school. Disruptive behaviour in lessons is confined to low-level misdemeanours which are usually dealt with swiftly. Serious incidents of poor behaviour are rare.
- Bullying is rare and there are clear procedures for dealing with it. Students know about different types of bullying and have a mature attitude to prejudice-based bullying. In a discussion about homophobic bullying, one Year 9 student agreed that even low level homophobic name calling is unacceptable, and said, 'It would be a bit low life if someone took the mick out of someone for being gay.' Others agreed, reflecting the school's clear message that discrimination is not tolerated.
- The behaviour policy has been reviewed and the new procedures have resulted in much greater clarity over rewards and sanctions. This has also led to a significant reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions. Students attending off-site alternative provision behave well as the courses they follow match their personal needs.
- Students' attendance has improved as a result of effective monitoring of attendance and timely and appropriate follow-up in cases of absence from school.
- The school council discusses issues that affect young people, for example on the risks associated with binge drinking. It is also a genuine forum for students to request changes in the school. Students describe recent successes such as getting more healthy options on the lunch menu and refurbishing toilets. The school sports council is highly effective in encouraging wider participation in a range of sporting activities.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is highly respected and responses to staff questionnaires demonstrate that members of staff feel genuinely valued. One middle leader said, 'I love working here. I always look forward to my day and I believe the students feel safe and like the school too.' The headteacher has been successful in developing leadership capacity at all levels. The local authority keeps in touch but does not provide support for this good school.
- Members of the senior leadership team share a common vision. They work effectively within a structure that distributes responsibility very effectively to meet the needs of the school and address the key priorities. The house system provides effective support for students and contributes to the wide range of activities the school offers beyond the formal curriculum.
- The role of middle leaders has recently been extended and the heads of English, mathematics and science now play a particularly important role in driving forward school improvement. Other middle leaders are developing skills as the school enters the next phase of working towards excellence, and teachers get high quality professional development to help them to improve.
- The curriculum is well balanced; although, despite the school's keen focus on equality of

opportunity for all, there is not yet a strong enough emphasis on improving literacy, particularly for poor readers. The range of vocational courses is very good. The school no longer enters students early for GCSEs. Starting Key Stage 4 courses in Year 9 works well because students get very effective guidance in Year 8 about their choices. In all years, the quality of careers advice and guidance students receive is outstanding.

- Assemblies, tutor times, focus days and several subjects promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. In English literature, students often study books which raise issues for discussion. Integrated citizenship, health education and religious education lessons only happen in Years 7 and 8, so enrichment of these aspects of students' personal development is not as strong in Years 9 to 13.
- As a result of very strong leadership, along with the highly effective teaching, sixth form achievement has improved rapidly. The curriculum provides a good balance of courses for sixth form students to move on to further and higher education; an increasing number do so. Sixth form tutor time provides opportunities for intensive student support, but the full 30 minutes are not always used effectively.
- The school's self-evaluation is robust and accurate, and provides a good basis for future development. Senior leaders have an analytical and sharp understanding of the quality of teaching and where support is needed to generate more outstanding teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors closely monitor the budget, ensure that the school carries out its statutory duties and take a close interest in the allocation and impact of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding. They ensure that performance management of all staff is carried out effectively and that progression on pay scales is linked to performance.
 - Through its monitoring groups, governors have a detailed knowledge of the quality of teaching, achievement and the day-to-day financial management of the school. Specific governors focus on key elements of school improvement before reporting back to the full governing body, thereby ensuring that the governors' monitoring and evaluation role is carried out highly effectively.
 - Governors regularly review statutory policies and, through frequent audits, make sure that arrangements for safeguarding students are fully compliant and meet statutory requirements.

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

Unique reference number	137833
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	412874

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1088
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Laraine Jalili-Hodges
Headteacher	Jane Prideaux
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01622 659036
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