

Mascalls School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118911
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	397486
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2012
Lead inspector	Meena Kumari Wood HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy convertor
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	1,436
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Sparkhall
Headteacher	Stuart Reeves
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 May 2007
School address	Maidstone Road Paddock Wood Tonbridge TN12 6LT
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

Meena Kumari Wood

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lesley Leak

Additional inspector

Howard Jones

Additional inspector

Michael Elson

Additional inspector

Jim McVeigh

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 57 teachers teaching 53 lessons, of which six were joint observations with members of the senior and middle leadership teams. Meetings were held with five groups of students, school staff, including senior and middle leaders, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including departmental development plans and the school self-evaluation, case studies of students whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, the safeguarding and equality policies, and the governing body minutes. In addition, they analysed 269 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

This school is a larger than average, non-selective school in an area with grammar schools and has a large sixth form. It is a popular, over-subscribed school. The proportion of students entering or leaving the school other than at the usual times is lower than the national average for secondary schools. A much lower proportion of students than average are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportions of students on the school action and school action plus programmes are double the average; most of these have moderate learning difficulty, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and the proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the average. The vast majority of students are White British and there is no other significant group from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. The sixth form is satisfactory and improving. The majority of parents, carers and students are highly positive about the quality of education and care provided. Students start from a low base and make good progress, and over the last three years, an improving trend of GCSE examination results has resulted in attainment that is broadly average. The school is not yet outstanding because teaching and the progress of students in lessons is not yet consistently good and more often outstanding.
- Teaching is good. Where the work matches students' needs and abilities through well-structured tasks and teachers carefully check learning, students make good progress. A few lessons lack sufficient challenge for the more-able students. Assessment activities and marking are not consistently employed effectively to plan learning in line with students' levels and do not always inform students of where they can improve. Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory with much that is good and results in broadly satisfactory progress and achievement. In some subjects, lesson activities do not fully extend students' learning, particularly their critical thinking or evaluative skills.
- Very effective support for disabled students and those with special educational needs results in the majority making good progress. Attendance is broadly average. The school provides good curricular opportunities and works actively with external partners to raise achievement. This helps students engage enthusiastically in their education.
- Students feel safe. Their behaviour is good and they are well-motivated learners.
- The headteacher has responded very successfully to challenges he has faced, through effective performance management processes resulting in greater capacity and stability in middle leadership and teaching staff. Moreover, through monitoring rigorously students' behaviour, learning and attainment, his actions have resulted in raising achievement in Key Stage 4 this year, establishing a good 'behaviour for learning' ethos and raising the aspirations of both staff and students.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop greater consistency in assessment across subjects and key stages ensuring that :
 - information on students' abilities, knowledge and skills is used to plan more challenging activities and tasks which extend their learning and develop their critical thinking and evaluative skills
 - the regular marking of students' class and homework consistently tells students how to improve, and develops their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Accelerate the progress and attainment of sixth form students through:
 - consolidating and personalising the induction processes, and the advice and guidance provided when transferring from Year 11 to the sixth form.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The majority of parents and carers believe that their children achieve well in Years 7 to 11. Inspectors judge that the achievement of the majority of students is good. In the last year, the proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics declined when compared with the previous year, particularly for middle- and high-attaining students, because of lower than predicted outcomes in English. Senior managers have successfully addressed weaknesses in staffing and strengthened the moderation processes, and, as a result, the school's data are predicting above average GCSE results this year, with students making good progress in both mathematics and English. Examination results in the sixth form are below the national average, although students make satisfactory progress in most A- and AS-level subjects and good progress in some, for example, English literature.

In Years 7 to 11, the vast majority are keen to learn and, given their low starting points, they make good progress. They settle quickly and, where lessons have clear objectives and tasks in line with their abilities, they work independently and in groups. For instance, in a Year 11 health and social care lesson, students could articulate clearly the principal characteristics of caring for young children and the elderly, greatly valuing the confidence and skills they had acquired in working with these client groups. In this, as in many lessons, especially the advisory form tutor sessions, opportunities to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are well exploited.

In a few lessons where teachers do not sufficiently check students' learning during activities, or where tasks do not extend the learning of more-able students, some make satisfactory rather than good progress.

Assessment information is used effectively to provide targeted out-of-lesson support

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for students at risk of underachieving, including those on the school action and school action plus programmes and those with statements, and these students make good progress. As a result of well-attended and rigorously monitored interventions in English and mathematics, such as the Study Days, previously underachieving groups, and those with low levels of self-confidence or erratic attendance, make satisfactory and improving progress. However, as the school acknowledges and inspectors' observations confirm, activities and teachers' questioning techniques do not always extend to the most able, especially in English and science. Not all boys demonstrate the levels of achievement that are evident with girls. In Years 7 to 9, students requiring a structured, additional focus on their reading and writing skills receive personalised support in English, which helps them to make good progress.

Quality of teaching

The responses from parents, carers and students to the inspection questionnaires reflect the overwhelming majority view that teaching is good. The quality of teaching observed by inspectors was largely good. Teaching promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, for example through discussion of topical affairs, such as the London transport arrangements for the Olympic Games. In lessons where students are encouraged to learn in depth, tasks are structured well and are in line with students' abilities. This ensures that all students can reflect on the knowledge and skills they have learnt and consolidate these further. In a good Year 11 English lesson, group activities helped students to discuss and evaluate effectively their written responses to the literary text, using examination success criteria. In a good Year 10 Spanish lesson, the teacher's excellent use of the target language encouraged accuracy and fluency in communication skills, with students visibly enjoying their learning.

In lessons where teaching is only satisfactory, students are not fully challenged in their learning through the activities and tasks provided. Moreover, teachers focus more on simply giving information than on developing genuine understanding. In the sixth form, inspectors observed some good teaching, but in some cases, students were not developing their higher-order thinking and writing skills well enough.

Assessment activities, including peer- and self-assessment, are used inconsistently across subjects. Where these activities are employed well, teachers check students' learning and re-frame tasks to ensure students have fully understood. For instance, in one Year 10 construction lesson, students' grasp of handling cutting tools and techniques for measurements were carefully supervised, with appropriate guidance given by the teacher. This resulted in students making good progress, and, importantly, knowing what they needed to do next.

Students' work is marked frequently. In most cases, the marking provides students with clearly detailed information about where they have been successful and what they need to do to improve. Teachers set realistic targets, which the majority of students know and understand. However, the quality of the marking varies within subjects, so that not all students can demonstrate precisely what they need to do to

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attain their targets.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Inspectors do not endorse the concerns expressed by some parents relating to poor behaviour in school. The inspection team found that the majority of students behave well in lessons, are respectful and courteous but occasionally, if the activity is not sufficiently absorbing, a few lose attention and chatter. Behaviour was better in Years 10 and 11 than for the younger students.

Students overwhelmingly say that they feel safe in school and that any bullying, name-calling or teasing is immediately dealt with. Exclusions have reduced and incidences of disruptive behaviour have reduced by half in the last year. One parent commented to inspectors on the 'inclusive, friendly and accepting school ethos and welcome from all staff and students'. This had helped integrate her child, who had been the victim of serious bullying in a previous school. Attendance is at the national average and students arrive punctually to school and to lessons. Students who are at risk of underachieving, internally excluded or persistent absentees benefit greatly from the learning support and mentoring activities provided by the 'Beacon' team.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has very successfully steered his leaders and managers in addressing robustly areas for improvement identified during the last inspection and, in addition, identifying further strategies for continuous improvements, including rigorous staff performance management. Much has been done by the deputy headteacher to improve the quality of teaching, including an internal observation process that rightly focuses on students' learning and progress in lessons. Subject leaders meet regularly to share good practice and monitor students' achievement. Their clear focus on improving teachers' performance through coaching and professional development sessions has resulted in greater understanding of the link between teaching and achievement. The school has a broadly accurate view of the quality of teaching. The school leaders have demonstrated their strong capacity to bring about sustained improvement through effective self-evaluation processes and this has been acknowledged by parents, carers and students. One parent referred to the school as a 'shining light amongst local schools'.

The clarity of direction and effective partnership work with parents, carers and external agencies have combined well to shape the ethos of the school and to ensure that all students have an equal chance to do well. Sharper monitoring of students' performance, along with the tracking of progress, is notably resulting in the raising of attainment for current Year 11 and sixth form students this year.

The impact of the curriculum on students' outcomes is good. Through engaging with businesses and further education college partners, the school is developing personalised pathways for vocational courses and apprenticeships, which are greatly

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valued by students. Senior managers are aware that for students to accelerate their acquisition of knowledge and skills, especially in relation to literacy, numeracy and science, greater joint-working is needed between academic and vocational staff. Lower-ability students benefit from smaller 'Nurture' groups, which help them to learn more effectively. Students receive good advice and guidance on their next steps in Year 9. In recognition of the low outcomes in some subjects, the school has recently addressed some weaker aspects of the advice, guidance and induction given to potential sixth form students, but these recent changes have not yet had time to make a significant impact on students' achievement.

Extra-curricular activities, and in particular, vertical tutoring groups, are much appreciated by all students and enable older students to take on leadership and mentoring roles. Very good use is made of the 'advisory' sessions to foster students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development, especially in relation to citizenship. The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations for safeguarding students and has given effective challenge and support to improving the attainment and progress of different groups of students, in line with the school's equalities plan.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Mascalls School, Tonbridge TN12 6LT

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and were impressed by how polite and courteous you were, and by your good attitudes towards learning.

Mascalls School is a good school and the sixth form is satisfactory. As a result of the good teaching and the curriculum, most of you enjoy your lessons, make good progress and attain results that are broadly average in your GCSE examinations. In most lessons, we observed well-planned tasks and activities, but in a few lessons, planning and feedback to support your learning were not clear enough to help you to make the progress of which you are capable. However, the school is providing those of you who need it with good support in mathematics and English in the lead up to your examinations, as well as specific guidance for those who need it, outside lessons. Stimulating extra-curricular and leadership opportunities that you greatly value, especially in the 'advisories', help you develop as responsible citizens, and most of you receive good guidance on your next steps.

We have asked senior leaders to do the following things to help the school improve further.

- Improve your progress and GCSE attainment further in all subjects, by giving you more detailed feedback on your work and ensuring that teachers always plan challenging activities and tasks in line with your abilities, so that all of you fully achieve your potential.
- Ensure that in Year 11, advice, guidance and induction prepare you fully for the sixth form subjects you have chosen and help you to attain successful outcomes.

We wish you all the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Meena Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector

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