

Swadelands School

Ham Lane, Lenham, Kent, ME 172LL

Inspection dates 10–11 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 make good progress. As a result, achievement continues to improve as shown in the examination results.
- Typically teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers use their skills and subject knowledge well and adapt the pace of learning to enable students to make good progress.
- The sixth form is good. It offers a flexible range of subject choices that ensure students' needs are well met. Consequently, examination results continue to rise.
- Relationships between teachers and students are a key strength in creating a very positive climate for learning.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Students say bullying is rare and that they feel safe and well cared for.
- The wide range of activities offered enriches students' opportunities for success.
- The experienced headteacher leads a strong committed leadership team that drives continued improvement in teaching and learning.
- The reorganised governing body engages fully with the leaders, staff and students offering challenge and strong support.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching is consistently of the highest quality to ensure that all students, especially some disabled students or those with special educational needs, make rapid and outstanding progress at all times.
- Strategies to improve students' literacy skills across the curriculum are not embedded.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons, of which five were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits around the school as part of themed learning walks.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and school staff, including middle and senior leaders.
- Inspectors analysed the 27 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the 30 responses to the staff questionnaire during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised the school's data about students' achievement, examined records relating to attendance, behaviour, safety, bullying, and safeguarding and looked at documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's work including governors' minutes.

Inspection team

James Coyle, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila Browning

Additional Inspector

Roger Garrett

Additional Inspector

Ann Sidney

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. It is non-selective and serves Maidstone, Ashford and surrounding Kent villages.
- The number of students who join or leave the school partway through their education is above average.
- The great majority of students are of White British heritage, with very few speaking English as an additional language.
- There are more boys than girls in the school.
- The proportion of students supported by school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The school specialises in sports and holds several national quality standards and awards.
- The school's recent GCSE results met the government's floor standard, which is the minimum level expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013 raise the quality of teaching and learning across the school so that it is outstanding by:
 - ensuring teachers have consistently high expectations of all students, and thereby further increase the proportions making better than expected progress throughout the school
 - embedding the initiatives to improve students' literacy skills in different subjects
 - checking that the structures, systems and support for all disabled students and those with special educational needs are having the expected impact so that these students consistently make at least the same progress as other students in the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the school with lower starting points and standards than nationally expected. The vast majority of students make at least the expected levels of progress with a significant proportion making better than expected progress. The school recognises there is still work to be done to increase this proportion to move the school to the next level. However, students leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- The percentage of students achieving five A* to C passes at GCSE including English and mathematics is in line with the national average. The school has maintained and added to the substantial improvements made in 2011 and has secured an upward five year trend. Where there is variation between different subjects and in English and mathematics or by vulnerable students the gaps are closing rapidly.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding because students are not yet achieving exceptionally well. Evidence from the school's data, checks on students' progress and inspection evidence indicate that well-targeted intervention and support strategies are rapidly closing the gaps among different groups of students. The school has introduced additional support to help students eligible for the pupil premium and consequently they are making at least good progress.
- Students with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs, generally make good progress from their starting points because of the impact of specific interventions seen in case studies and in lessons where careful monitoring and teaching gave structure and support to their learning. Nonetheless, where teachers' expectations were not sufficiently challenging and when additional support was not always well pitched some of these students did not learn as well as they could.
- New literacy and reading partnership programmes are in place to help speed up students' progress. While the school is focused on developing students' literacy skills these are not fully developed in different subjects. Students were observed reading in class but they do not always apply their reading skills widely and well in all subjects.
- A strong feature of many lessons was the way in which students confidently assessed their own and each others' work. For example, in a Year 9 design and technology lesson because teachers ensured that students understood what they were going to learn and why, students were able to check each other's work and explain how to improve it.
- Learning and progress in the sixth form are good. The successful sports scholarship scheme and an increasing range of courses attract many external students. Although attainment on entry is below national averages, achievement is good and shows an improving picture across a wide range of subjects and different courses.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching in most subjects is typically good and in some cases outstanding. There are still some variations, however, and not all teaching is at the level of the very best to ensure all students make rapid and sustained progress.
- In an outstanding Year 9 mathematics lesson, positive relationships meant that the students settled quickly to the work which was clearly explained by the teacher. Those that struggled to understand mathematical terms had their work adapted and changed in order to meet their needs and required expectations.
- Good and better teaching was exemplified by teachers' high expectations, with work set at the right level for students' differing abilities, good subject knowledge and ongoing checks for students' understanding.
- Students work well in groups communicating effectively with each other and when reporting back to the class. Developing a whole-school approach to the systematic teaching and reinforcing of students' literacy skills across different subjects is not yet embedded.

- Students' progress is continually checked and tracked; high-quality marking and guidance on how to improve work linked to a grading system are clearly understood and valued by students. In a Year 7 English class, students were introduced to a picture of a ladder indicating different writing levels against which they could measure their own performance. They were then able to consider each others' efforts and feedback for improvement.
- Feedback from parent surveys indicates that parents and carers consider teaching to be good.
- Effective lesson planning by teachers and teaching assistants and extensive staff training on matching work at the right level for students have improved student achievement. Nonetheless, the school is rightly determined to improve even further the level of challenge for all students and the systems and support for some students with special educational needs to ensure that they achieve their best in every lesson and across all subjects.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good because good subject knowledge and skills feature strongly. Small groups lead to good interactions between teachers and students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well in lessons and around the school. They arrive at their classes on time and treat each other and adults with respect. Survey evidence from parents, carers and staff and discussions with students confirm that behaviour is typically good and the school is a safe place for learning.
- Students support each other have positive attitudes to learning and participate in lessons effectively. They particularly like practical learning activities in science, technology and sport.
- Students enjoy school. This together with a range of strategies employed by the school and local authority has significantly improved attendance rates which are now well above national averages.
- The school's actions, including specific programmes for vulnerable groups, to tackle permanent and fixed-term exclusions have resulted in a dramatic downturn in numbers and this trend continues.
- There are few reports of bullying by students including homophobic and e-bullying. Where this does occur the school has effective measures in place to deal with them. Students are aware of how to stay safe through an effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural programme that includes personal, social and health education.

The leadership and management are good

- The experienced headteacher provides strong and decisive leadership. He is effectively supported by a committed senior team and governing body, who share the high ambition for students' achievement and continued improvement in this closely knit school.
- Through rigorous checks leaders analyse the school's strengths and areas for improvement and use this information to secure good self-evaluation.
- Since the last inspection the leadership team has been successful in improving the quality of teaching, learning, behaviour and safety and the curriculum.
- Extensive staff training and high-quality professional development have resulted in rapidly improved outcomes for students most notably at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form. Performance management is well embedded and good teaching is recognised, celebrated and rewarded.
- Students' progress is carefully checked and evaluated, targeting interventions where and when required. A review of internal structures and systems is rightly planned to further improve the provision and learning for those students with special educational needs and reflects the school's ongoing commitment to equalities and tackling any discrimination.
- The broad, balanced and interesting curriculum meets the needs of students well. The 'flight pathways' offer a wide range of courses to suit students' different learning styles and abilities

and includes sport, music, drama, art, and work placements.

- The sports specialism provides good opportunities for further qualifications, enrichment and travel and contributes to students' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The developing sixth form benefits from increasing numbers and flexibility and allows students a virtual bespoke choice of subjects. Students remark on the strength of relationships and atmosphere of mutual support.
- Most Parent View returns and the school's own parent surveys are overwhelmingly positive about the school. The school has developed good partnerships with parents, carers and agencies to ensure that all work well together and in the best interest for students' welfare and care.
- Statutory safeguarding requirements are met. The local authority gives effective challenge and support, for example, in tackling attendance and exclusions.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors recently undertook a review and reorganised to better challenge the school's performance.
 - Governors have fully supported school leaders in embedding 'Teachers Standards' to further guide monitoring, evaluation and reporting to improve teaching and student achievement.
 - Governors ensure the efficient management of financial resources including the allocation and impact of the pupil premium funding on achievement.

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	118793
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	401788

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	706
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Justin Byrd
Headteacher	Richard Baddeley
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 March 2010
Telephone number	01622858267
Fax number	01622850668
Email address	admin@swadeslands.kent.uk

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