

# Aylesford School – Sports College

Teapot Lane, Aylesford, ME20 7JU

**Inspection dates** 13–14 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- From their low starting points, all groups of students make good progress. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C or the equivalent has risen significantly and is now in line with the national average.
- The sixth form is good. Students' achievement in vocational subjects is particularly strong. Students work hard and achieve well.
- The majority of teaching is good because teachers plan lessons thoroughly and use their specialist subject knowledge to motivate and engage students.
- Students' behaviour and safety are good. They are respectful and polite both in lessons and as they move around the school. Students are proud of their school and trust in the staff to help and support them.
- The headteacher, supported by an able and determined team of senior and middle leaders, has brought about improvements in teaching and in students' achievement and progress.
- Governors have a clear understanding of what still needs to be improved because they know the school well.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Some teaching requires improvement because not all teachers have consistently high enough expectations of what students can achieve in their lessons.
- Leaders do not check the quality of students' work and teachers' marking rigorously enough.
- There is variation in the quality of marking, the appropriateness of homework and the standard of presentation of students' work.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons. Some 31 of these observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also visited an assembly and tutor time and talked to students at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors analysed 160 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors and a representative of the local authority. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from Mid-Kent College.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentary evidence provided by the school, including information about the progress of students, records of lesson observations, the school's own checks on how well it is doing, the school's improvement plan, attendance records and logs of behavioural incidents.
- Safeguarding procedures were checked.

## Inspection team

Lisa Moore, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Hilary Macdonald

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kanwaljit Singh

Additional Inspector

Cliff Mainey

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Aylesford School is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It is a non-selective school in a local authority in which a significant number of schools select students by ability.
- The percentage of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families), is slightly below the national average.
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is slightly above the national average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average.
- Approximately 70 Key Stage 4 students currently attend courses at Mid-Kent College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, and accelerate students' progress by ensuring that:
  - all staff have consistently high expectations of what students can achieve in their lessons and set standards for the presentation of written work
  - students' work is marked according to the school's policies and in a manner that helps them make the best possible progress in their lessons
  - homework is set according to the school's policies.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by strengthening the way leaders check on the quality of teachers' marking and the quality of students' work.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students start Year 7 with levels of attainment that are well below those expected for their age. The standards reached by students at the end of Key Stage 4 are rising because they make good progress overall, including in English and mathematics.
- GCSE results have been improving since 2011. The proportion of students who achieved five or more GCSEs at grade C or higher, including in English and mathematics, increased significantly in 2013, and is now in line with the national average.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make good progress, including in English and mathematics. The gaps between their achievement and that of other students are closing and in English their progress is better than that of other students.
- In 2013, students known to be eligible for free school meals achieved on average one third of a GCSE grade lower in English and two thirds of a GCSE grade lower in mathematics than other students in the school. However, their GCSE average points scores were significantly above those of similar students across the country.
- Disabled students and students with special educational needs make good progress because teachers and teaching assistants are well trained and provide targeted and highly personalised programmes of support.
- The school makes accurate checks on students' progress. Students receive very effective extra help and support when they need it. This includes students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up programme and students eligible for the pupil premium including those known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has developed a wide range of ways to help attend to the academic and personal needs of students and tracks and evaluates the impact of this additional funding to make sure it is used well. This extra support has had a positive impact on students' achievement and progress.
- Students in the sixth form are set challenging targets and their performance is tracked carefully. As a result they make good progress, particularly in vocational subjects such as health and social care.
- Approximately 70 students in Key Stage 4 attend vocational courses at a local college. Their attendance, behaviour and learning are monitored frequently by the school. These students make similar progress to that of other students in the school.
- More-able students are now making better progress than in previous years and a higher proportion of these students are achieving A\* and A grades at GCSE. These students said to inspectors that teachers expect them to aim for the grade higher than their target.
- The school does enter some students early for GCSE mathematics but only when they are ready to achieve their best grades. A minority of these students are re-entered for the examination if they do not reach their target grade.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Most teaching is good. Examples of outstanding teaching were seen in a range of subjects and year groups. As a result, students learn well and consistently make good progress. Students in the sixth form are taught well.
- Typically lessons are well planned and demonstrate teachers' thorough knowledge of their students' levels of achievement and individual needs. Teachers check regularly to make sure students are making progress with the tasks they have been set. In these lessons there is a clear sense of pace and purpose and no time is wasted.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and show their enthusiasm through energetic teaching that motivates students and demands effort from them. Students respond positively and relish the challenge they are given in these lessons. Students, including the more able, are stretched and make good progress.

- Teachers use questioning skilfully to test and deepen students' knowledge and understanding. In the best lessons questioning is planned and matched to students' needs so that most students are able to make a positive contribution to the discussion. In an outstanding Year 11 sociology lesson, the teacher used questioning most effectively to extend students' understanding of a difficult concept.
- Teachers' detailed knowledge of examination requirements and clear explanations ensure that students are well prepared for examinations.
- Reading, writing and communication skills are taught consistently well in all subject areas and are prominent in all lesson plans. Inspectors noted the large number and good variety of books available in all areas of the school. Significant numbers of students were seen reading at break and lunchtimes. This has a positive impact on students' learning, for example by helping them to develop their research skills.
- Some teaching requires improvement. In these lessons, teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are not high enough and a poor standard of presentation of students' work is accepted. As a result, the pace of learning is slow and students sometimes lose concentration.
- While many teachers provide helpful feedback on what students need to do to improve, this is not applied consistently across the school. Where there is good quality feedback, it is detailed and tells students about what they should do next. However, in some books there is little evidence of marking and students are unclear about what they need to do to improve.
- Homework is not always set at the appropriate level to build on or extend students' learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students and staff agreed that behaviour in school has improved recently. They were unanimous in the opinion that students' behaviour is good and inspectors agreed with this view.
- Students are courteous and respectful towards each other and to adults in school. Relationships are good. Students listen well to one another and show respect for different opinions and viewpoints, demonstrating the school's strong promotion of equality of opportunity and its belief in involving and supporting all students.
- Students are proud of their school. In meetings with inspectors, a number of students from all age ranges said, 'This is a good school.'
- The amount of poor behaviour recorded in and outside of classrooms is low. The recently reviewed and well-established consequences system has had a marked impact on reducing the levels of unacceptable behaviour.
- In the majority of lessons, students work hard as a result of high expectations and the appropriate use of the school's sanctions and rewards. In these lessons behaviour management is seamless.
- Where teaching is weaker, behaviour is less than good because the teacher has low expectations, lessons lack pace and behaviour management is poor.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students say they feel safe at school. They have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying, including cyber and homophobic bullying. They say that bullying is rare but when it does occur it is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Safeguarding requirements are met very well. Policies, procedures and practice are rigorous and the school has strong partnerships with external agencies to support those students who are more at risk. External agencies such as the police and the charity Stonewall visit the school to support learning in assemblies and personal, social and health education lessons.
- Attendance has improved and is in line with the national average. There have been no permanent exclusions for two years and the number of fixed-term exclusions has decreased as a result of the school's behaviour management policies.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher is determined to ensure the best for all students. He is well supported by the senior leadership team and the governing body. He has built effective teams of middle and senior leaders and has created a culture of ambition and aspiration. Improvements in students' progress and achievement, including in the sixth form, arise from this strong leadership.
  - Middle leaders play an active role in improving teaching and students' learning and progress. Roles and responsibilities are clearly divided and understood and staff are held firmly to account for students' achievement. The training programme for class teachers is providing them with high-quality professional development and is contributing to the speeding up of students' progress and the overall rise in standards.
  - The school gathers and analyses a wide range of information relating to the quality of teaching and the attainment and progress of individuals and groups of students in all year groups and in all subject areas. As a result, leaders have a realistic and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use this information to plan carefully for further improvement as well as to ensure that extra help is directed to students when they need it. All teachers and the governing body possess a clear understanding of the school's performance.
  - Responses to Parent View show parents' and carers' confidence in the school and confirm that students feel safe and well looked after and that they make good progress.
  - The leadership of the sixth form is good. There is a drive for improvement and students are challenged to do better. The curriculum has been broadened so that the needs of students are better met. Students reported that they receive a good level of support, advice and guidance and as a result they feel well prepared for future training, education or work.
  - Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well in many lessons. For example, in a personal, social and health education lesson, Year 8 students displayed great empathy in their discussions with people affected by recent flooding. Students are given many opportunities to learn about other cultures through assemblies, visits abroad and a well-established link with a school in Zambia.
  - The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs and aspirations of the students. A recent review of the curriculum has meant that more academic courses are offered in Key Stages 4 and 5, ensuring that the future needs of learners are better met.
  - The local authority has provided a good level of support for the school in the evaluation of its performance and in the development of training following the previous inspection.
  - Effective systems for monitoring the quality of teaching are established. However, monitoring does not always include a robust evaluation of the quality of students' work as recorded in workbooks, or of the quality and impact of marking. There are clear links between teachers' performance, students' outcomes and the appraisal system. The headteacher and the governing body take account of this when agreeing teachers' pay progression.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They share the headteacher's determination to raise standards. They have developed their understanding of data so that they are able to ask more probing questions of senior leaders and challenge performance. The governors have a good understanding of the standard of teaching in the school. They are well informed about the achievement and progress of students at risk of not doing so well and how additional funding is being used to support these students. Governors make sure that the performance of all staff, including the headteacher, is linked to pay progression.
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## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118882
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	434118

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	943
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	124
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Divall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Doug Lawson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20–21 March 2013
<b>Telephone Number</b>	01622 717341
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