

Fulston Manor School

Brenchley Road, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 4EG

Inspection dates 27–28 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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 and the progress of different groups of learners is improving rapidly.
- The quality of teaching is good and continuing to improve with some examples of outstanding practice.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the school. Their conduct, manners and punctuality are good. They are courteous to adults, welcoming to visitors and respectful of one another.
- Students say they feel safe at school and have a good understanding of how to stay safe.
- The headteacher and the governing body have a clear vision for the direction of the school. Their actions have brought about improvements to standards of teaching and students' achievement and they have the ambition to take them to the very highest levels.
- The sixth form is good. Students are strongly supported by their teachers to ensure they achieve well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- On occasions, teaching is not always planned as precisely as it might be. In these lessons, progress for a minority of students is slower as they are not fully challenged.
- Teachers do not consistently provide written feedback to students about the next steps in their learning.
- Leaders do not always check regularly enough on the quality and impact of marking.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 58 lessons or part lessons, involving more than half of the teachers. A small number were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, staff, including senior and other managers, and members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, including the offer it makes for disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- They looked at a number of documents, including: information about safeguarding; the school’s own information on students’ current progress and parents’ and carers’ views; the schools self - evaluation; and records of monitoring in relation to teaching, students’ behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors observed students’ workbooks in lessons in order to help evaluate their progress over time. A number of exercise books from a range of teaching sets were checked against students’ progress information.
- Inspectors took account of the 55 responses to the online Parent View survey and considered the 104 responses made by staff in the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Haydn Evans, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Steven Colledge	Additional Inspector
Janet Hallett	Additional Inspector
Clifford Walker	Additional Inspector
Wendy Walters	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than most secondary schools.
- A very small proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups represented are of Black African and Black Caribbean heritage.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for looked after children and students known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium is below average.
- The proportion of students given extra support from within the school and externally or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Students are entered early for GCSE in mathematics and English.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement and the quality of teaching by making sure that all:
 - teachers use information on students' progress to plan work which challenges all students
 - students are clear about what they should do to improve their work
 - leaders check regularly on the quality and impact of marking.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of students is good

- Students join the school with significantly below average levels of attainment. They make good progress, so that by the end of Year 11 attainment is nearly average.
- Students achieve well and the progress of different groups, including the most able, is improving.
- Students' achievement is not yet outstanding because students' progress in some key subjects is not sufficiently above average. This is partly because some teachers do not always check students' progress to challenge and fully engage them in their learning.
- All students are encouraged to read as often as possible. For example, time is allocated at the start of English lessons and because the policy is well supported by teachers it has had a positive effect on the quality of reading.
- Those in Year 7 eligible for the catch-up premium receive targeted support through the 'reading recovery programme'. This enables them to achieve as well as their peers.
- The school's examination results are improving. The school's tracking of students' progress is becoming more rigorous as well as robust. It has the capacity to identify underachievement more promptly so that extra help can be given swiftly.
- Achievement in English and the humanities is significantly above average. The proportion of students making good progress in key subjects is also improving rapidly.
- Students are generally well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment and the proportion of Year 11 who remain in education, training or work on leaving the school is significantly above average.
- The rates of progress in Years 10 and 11 are increasing rapidly. These evaluations are based upon the tracking information on students' progress and the results of examinations for students entered early. The school's own information and written work in key subject areas confirm that students make good progress over time, for example in science, mathematics and English.
- The very small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those of Black African and Black Caribbean heritages, are achieving in line with other students in the school. This is because the monitoring of students' progress is now more rigorous and systems are more robust. This enables more appropriate help to be given.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is in line with other students in the school.
- A minority of students who are known to be eligible for additional funding achieve well. The gaps in attainment between these pupils and others in English and in mathematics are negligible; all groups of students achieve above the average for students nationally.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Pass rates are improving and completion rates and retention rates are above average. Students' progress is improving, particularly in the case of the more able, and this is supported by the partnerships developing with the local grammar schools and the college of further education.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is typically at least good and improving. Variations in the quality of teaching across different subject areas exist but are minor.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is universally strong. In the great majority of cases, teachers plan lessons that are organised, well resourced and innovative. They are supported effectively by additional adults. In most lessons, the pace of learning is good and students' attitudes to learning are very positive.
- When teaching is most effective, students make rapid progress because teachers make very effective use of information about students' prior attainment to plan activities that challenge students of all abilities. Teachers give help promptly to ensure that students understand clearly

what they need to do in order to improve their work and achieve their ambitious personal targets.

- For example, in a mathematics lesson seen during the inspection, students progressed rapidly because a teacher had planned activities based on students' prior learning. In a highly successful computing lesson, no time was wasted because the teacher had planned the stimulus materials very carefully, to engage students. The teacher observed closely how well students were learning and intervened skilfully when they needed further explanation or challenge.
- Teaching is less effective on the few occasions when teachers do not make sufficient use of information about students' prior attainment to plan their learning in a way that fully challenges all students. Consequently, the progress made by students in these lessons is sometimes slower than their peers'.
- Most teachers mark students' work regularly. However, this is not consistently strong across the school and where it is less effective, students are not given enough specific advice and guidance about how to improve.
- Overall, the teaching of reading, writing, communication and mathematics is effective. The great majority of teachers plan activities that reinforce these important skills.
- Students are given good quality advice about how to stay healthy and how they can be active citizens. Students feel well supported when they make decisions about the next stage in their education.
- In the best sixth form teaching, expectations are high and the questioning of students helps develop their understanding which is reinforced by purposeful writing activities. Consequently, most students make at least good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are keen to do well; they respect their teachers, enjoy their learning and appreciate the opportunities offered to them. Their general conduct, manners and punctuality are good.
- Students have good attitudes to learning; they work enthusiastically, respond readily in class and show a collective ambition to do their best.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. They have positive relationships with each other and adults and value the tutoring system, which they feel makes a significant contribution to the community spirit within the school. For example, they enthusiastically contribute to charity work, such as fund raising.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students and their parents and carers confirm that students feel very safe in school. Few incidences of bullying occur and, when they do, students are confident that they are dealt with promptly and effectively. Students understand what constitutes bullying, including homophobic, racist and cyber bullying.
- Attendance remains above the national average. However, the proportion of students who regularly fail to attend has fallen as a direct result of the school's focus on improving attendance.
- The school manages those students with known behaviour problems well.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because in a small minority of lessons when the teaching is less effective, behaviour declines. This is confirmed by students who say that low-level disruption occasionally occurs in a few lessons.
- The good behaviour of the sixth form contributes to the positive ethos of the school. Sixth formers lead by example and are good role models to the younger students. For example, they offer advice and support to those who wish to stay on.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and the governing body have a clear vision for the school. Since the last inspection, the headteacher, through strong leadership and management, has maintained good teaching and learning throughout the school by working in partnership with his very experienced senior leadership team and focused governing body. His determined and systematic approach to improving teaching has resulted in a rapid increase in students' progress and the promotion of consistently good learning throughout the school.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have been successful in raising standards of teaching by ensuring that the quality of teaching and students' achievement are closely aligned with how well staff are paid.
- Further improvement is still needed in some subject areas to secure outstanding teaching and learning overall and this is being attended to through leadership development including the sharing of best practice and a more systematic approach to professional training.
- The contribution of middle leaders to raising standards of teaching and learning has been important, although occasionally books have not been checked regularly enough to ensure that teachers' marking always gives students high-quality guidance about how to improve.
- The school has managed its finances very well. Recently it opened a substantial teaching block including many excellent resources and facilities. The quality of education has not been compromised during the building programme.
- The school is resolved to involve everyone. It offers equal opportunities for all and is committed to ensuring that no student group is discriminated against.
- Most of the subjects offered by the school are academic, which parents and carers support. However, work-related subjects are available to those students for whom they are suitable. There is a range of after-school activities mainly focusing on the extension of students' learning. These are popular with the students and highly thought of by parents and carers.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs of students are extremely well met through lessons, other activities and particularly the after-school programmes.
- The partnership between parents and carers and the school is positive and has supported improvements. Similarly, the school is supported by a range of outside experts and advisors.
- The partnerships created with the feeder primary schools, including within the multi-academy trust, have helped transition and improved communication and understanding between the two sectors.
- Senior leaders have ensured that all safeguarding procedures are securely in place and meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school and of the school's analysis of students' progress. This enables them to hold senior leaders to account by asking challenging questions. Governors are fully aware of how the performance of teachers is managed, including the use of the Teachers' Standards, and support the headteacher effectively in improving the quality of teaching. The governing body ensures the efficient management of financial and other resources, and supports the headteacher well in determining priorities within financial constraints. They check carefully the use of additional funding received and monitor the impact on the achievement of those students supported through it. The governing body fulfils all of its statutory requirements, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection.

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	136324
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	440478

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

Type of school	Non-selective
School category	Convertor academy
Age range of students	11–18
Gender of students	Mixed
Number of students on the school roll	1,247
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	R Couzins
Headteacher	A Brookes
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2011
Telephone number	01795 475228
Email address	abrookes@fulstonmanor.kent.sch.uk

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