

The North

Essella Road, Ashford, Kent, TN24 8AL

Inspection dates 3–4 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The proportion of students on track to make good progress across subjects in Years 9 and 10 is too low.
- Too few students make good progress in science.
- Boys typically make less progress than girls, particularly in English.
- Some teachers are not sufficiently skilled in planning and teaching lessons that help students learn well.
- Lessons do not consistently provide students, and particularly the most able, with opportunities to stretch their thinking and deepen their learning.
- Homework is not contributing as well as needed to supporting students' learning in lessons.
- Students often do not make the effort to take on board teachers' feedback and take responsibility for their next steps in learning.
- Where teaching is less effective, students are not as consistently engaged in their learning.
- Although behaviour has improved significantly over the last year, low-level disruption persists in some lessons and in particular in science.
- Students' attendance is below that seen nationally.
- Students do not have routine opportunities to develop numeracy skills in lessons other than mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- The Swale Academies Trust has brought highly effective leadership to the school. Rapid improvements have been made to all aspects of school life.
- The Executive Principal and head of school have instilled a vision of high expectations and the belief that all students can succeed.
- Leaders at all levels are increasingly effective in driving improvement.
- Senior leaders and governors hold subject leaders tightly to account for the quality of teaching.
- Staff receive support and training to help them improve. As a result, teaching has improved markedly in a short time.
- Governors hold leaders rigorously and effectively to account for the school's performance.
- Students conduct themselves well around the site; they are courteous and respectful of each other and adults.
- Students feel safe and supported. Bullying is increasingly rare and work to tackle discrimination is proving effective.
- The Laurel Centre provides well for its students. They receive effective individualised support to engage in the mainstream school. They learn well.
- The sixth form is good. Students in the sixth form learn well in all subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 39 lessons, 15 jointly with senior leaders. In addition inspectors undertook a number of shorter visits to lessons to look at behaviour. The lead inspector undertook a scrutiny of students' English books, jointly with the head of school.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, teachers and groups of students.
- Inspectors reviewed a number of documents including safety procedures, behaviour and attendance records, self-evaluation and planning documents and the school's records on performance management and teaching and learning.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Diana Choulerton, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Steven Smith

Additional Inspector

Iain Freeland

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Bray

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- In February 2014, the local authority commissioned the Executive Principal of the Swale Academies Trust and a national leader in education (NLE), to assume responsibility for leading the school out of special measures. The trust has provided the senior leadership team for the school. This included the head of school, working under the direction of the Executive Principal. In April 2015 a new executive headteacher was appointed to the trust and is now fulfilling this role for the school.
- Plans for the school to become an academy, joining the Swale Academies Trust, are at an advanced stage.
- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school. It has a sixth form.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for children who are looked after by the local authority, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families) is higher than that found nationally.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is much higher than the national average.
- The school has more boys than girls.
- A very small number of students attend full-time alternative education at Goldwyn School. A small number of other students attend Goldwyn School part time to study vocational courses.
- The school has a small, local authority funded unit, The Laurel Centre. The unit has capacity for 24 students, age 11 to 19 with autistic spectrum disorder.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Building on the good practice already in the school, make sure that all teachers have the skills needed to plan and teach lessons which:
 - consistently motivate students to engage in learning and push themselves to excel
 - always stretch and challenge students and the most able in particular, so they all make good progress from their starting points
 - ensure students take on board the helpful marking and feedback they receive and use it to improve
 - provide students with homework that effectively supports their learning in lessons
 - ensure good behaviour so low-level disruption does not slow the pace of learning.
- Make sure that teachers of subjects other than mathematics support students' development of numeracy skills as they relate to the subject being taught.
- Improve achievement by making sure that:
 - students in Years 9 and 10 continue to be supported to catch up from previous underachievement and make further good progress in all subjects where they are behind, and in particular in science
 - boys achieve as well as girls, in particular in English.
- Continue work to improve attendance so it is at least in line with that seen nationally.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The head of school, ably supported by the Executive Principal of the trust, has worked diligently and relentlessly to bring about rapid improvements in all aspects of the school's work. Together with senior leaders, they quickly gained the support of the school's staff and united them behind a vision of high expectations and belief that their students can excel. Much teaching is now good. Students typically make much better progress than was previously the case. Behaviour has improved significantly.
- The recently appointed executive headteacher has brought new ideas and impetus. Notably, a recent initiative to work intensively over three days with a group of students who continually disrupt lessons has worked well. Teachers, students and parents alike report on the positive impact it has had on behaviour.
- Leaders across the school take full responsibility for the effectiveness of their work and the new initiatives they introduce. They know the starting point for each piece of work they lead and collect the information needed to evaluate the impact of their actions.
- Subject leaders keep a close eye on the quality of teaching. Information from regular lesson observations, student feedback, scrutiny of students' work and achievement data is used well to identify what needs to improve and determine the best way forward. Subject leaders are held tightly to account. They report to regular panel meetings of senior leaders and governors, where the impact of their work is reviewed and next steps agreed. Senior leaders carry out their own regular checks on the quality of teaching and achievement, to make sure subject leaders' judgements are accurate. Leaders also carry out checks to make sure that students attending the Goldwyn School achieve increasingly well.
- Through performance management, a comprehensive range of individualised training and support is available for all teachers to help them improve, including for those whose practice is already strong. Teachers who need to improve the most receive intensive support. Increasingly subject leaders run subject specific training and a recently introduced staff newsletter captures and shares the good and outstanding practice in the school.
- Leaders have worked effectively to ensure all have an equal opportunity to learn well, free from prejudice or discrimination and forge positive relationships. Work over the last six months has successfully raised students' awareness of homophobia. Assemblies and posters around the school helpfully promote awareness. Students are clear that homophobia is unacceptable and will be dealt with swiftly. Incidents of such behaviour are increasingly rare. Racism and discrimination against those with disabilities are now rare.
- All students have an equal opportunity to succeed. Leaders spend pupil premium funding effectively. Disadvantaged students benefit from a range of support including revision sessions at Key Stage 4 and handwriting sessions for students in Key Stage 3. As a result, disadvantaged students are learning increasingly well and catching up with their peers.
- Leaders carefully track all students' progress to make sure any students who are behind receive support to help them catch up. This includes mentoring, literacy support and intensive coursework completion sessions. Leaders meet regularly to review the impact of this support and plan next steps.
- The Laurel Centre is very well led. Each student has a highly personalised, effective support programme which enables them to participate in mainstream lessons and learn well. Activities at the centre such as student discussions about their own and society's views of autism support students' broader development.
- Over the last year, improvements in the curriculum and teaching have helped students to engage better in their learning and prepare them better for their next stage in learning. The school's curriculum is now fit for purpose. It provides a suitable range of academic and vocational courses suited to students' interests and abilities. Students who join the school with poor literacy and numeracy skills study English, mathematics and humanities in an integrated way in nurture groups in Years 7 and 8. This ensures students get the intensive support needed to improve. After-school clubs such as cricket, the basketball academy and rock climbing help promote sporting excellence.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted through a range of events and activities across the school. In values lessons, students consider moral and ethical issues, and learn about democracy and other faiths and cultures. Students regularly visit the school's working farm and the young farmers' club is award winning. The sixth form recently led a fund-raising event for the victims of the earthquake in Nepal. This helped students develop awareness of broader social issues and find out more about Nepali culture. The curriculum is increasingly helpful in preparing students for life in modern Britain. However, leaders and governors have rightly identified that more needs to be done to ensure that these aspects of students' development are routinely promoted in subject lessons.
- The local authority's decision to call on the Swale Academies Trust to lead the school out of special

measures has proved wise. The trust's support for the school over the last year has been invaluable. Suitably, the local authority has kept a close eye on proceedings. A local authority consultant has visited the school regularly to review progress and provide welcome and useful support and challenge.

- Students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form value the careers advice they receive. The school's own careers advisers together with an adviser from a local careers company, help students make informed choices about next steps. Students in Year 11 have individual meetings with advisers and visit other schools and colleges to find out about courses beyond 16. Careers education takes place in values lessons.
- Leaders have made sure the school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding. This includes for those who attend Goldwyn School. Staff receive suitable safeguarding training. Risk assessments and recruitment processes are sound.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Over the last year governors have played a vital role in the school's improvement. They are increasingly knowledgeable about all aspects of school performance, including the quality of teaching and achievement. They systematically hold leaders tightly to account. They receive detailed and helpful information from leaders. Frequent visits to the school give them a deeper insight into the school's work than would otherwise be possible.
 - Governors have made sure that in the future teachers' pay will be linked to performance. They have worked well with leaders to review how staff performance targets are set. They are now well placed to ensure that teachers' and support staff pay is fairly matched to performance.
 - The governing body fulfils its statutory duties in relation to safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Although students' behaviour has improved markedly over the last year, students do not all engage equally well in all lessons. The majority of students now behave consistently well and usually make their best effort. However, when lessons are not engaging or tasks are too easy or difficult, some students drift off task and engage in idle chatter. In some science lessons and a small number of other lessons this type of low-level disruption is quite common.
- The recent introduction of equipment checks at the start of the school day is having a positive impact on learning. Students now typically arrive at lessons equipped to learn.
- Students conduct themselves well around the school site. They are courteous, polite and respectful to each other and adults. The atmosphere in the school canteen is calm and pleasant.
- Students value the emphasis that leaders and teachers put on rewarding good behaviour and effort. This has been key to the significant improvement seen in behaviour over the last year.
- Students' attendance has improved. The number of students with low attendance has dropped significantly. However, overall attendance remains below the national figure.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students feel safe at school and they know where they can turn to for advice and support. Bullying is increasingly rare and dealt with swiftly.
- Students understand different types of bullying, including cyber bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe at school and in the wider world and online. Topics in values lessons and tutor time, such as sex and relationships education, road safety and the risks of drugs and alcohol, contribute well to this.
- Students who attend the Laurel Centre receive good support which helps them feel safe and secure. They meet with staff each morning to plan the day and this helps reduce any anxiety the students have.
- Leaders keep weekly phone contact with leaders at Goldwyn School. They make sure students are safe and attend regularly. They address any concerns about behaviour or progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Despite notable improvements over the last year, teaching is not yet consistently good. Some teachers do not have the necessary skills to plan and teach lessons that challenge and motivate students to learn well. In these lessons, concepts and tasks are not always explained well enough. Students often or receive the same level of challenge regardless of their ability.
- Students receive regular marking and feedback which provide helpful advice on how to improve. However,

students often do not make an effort to use this feedback to inform their approach to learning.

- Homework is not consistently helpful in supporting learning in lessons. The amount and quality of homework set is variable between classes and subjects.
- Teaching in English is a relative strength. Lessons typically engage students' interest and help them build confidence with their reading and writing. Recently introduced skills progression sheets help students and track how well they are doing in each aspect of English and know what the next steps in learning need to be. Students are increasingly able to write well and at length, using a range of techniques to draw the reader in. However, some students still struggle with spelling and continue to make the same mistakes even when the teacher has recently highlighted them.
- The recently introduced school literacy programme is having an impact. In September 2014 most Year 9 students had low reading ages. Now the majority of these students have a reading age that at least matches their age. Years 7 and 8 students' reading and spelling ages have also risen significantly. All students read carefully selected books that stretch their reading ability by just the right amount. Literacy is promoted well in all subjects, and regular rewards given in assemblies motivate students to improve.
- Most teaching of mathematics is enabling students to make good progress. However, teachers of other subjects are not routinely supporting students' mathematical development. Leaders have introduced a weekly numeracy session in form time but it is too soon to see the impact of this.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although students make markedly better progress than a year ago, they are not learning consistently well in all subjects and lessons. Students are learning increasingly well in English and mathematics but often do less well in science where teaching is typically less effective. Students generally make strong progress in Years 7 and 8 in other subjects. Students' progress is more variable in other subjects in Years 9 to 11.
- Leaders' swift actions to improve teaching and help students in Years 10 and 11 to catch up from previous underachievement have proved effective. Students' progress in English has improved quickly and dramatically. In 2014 the proportion of students making expected progress in English by the end of Key Stage 4 was in line with that seen nationally. In previous years it was low. Students are on track to achieve even more this summer. The proportion of students on track to make good progress in mathematics is also noticeably higher than previously and approaching the current national figure. However, students have not caught up from previous underachievement in science and many are not on track to make expected progress, particularly in Year 11.
- The proportion of students getting five A * to C grades at GCSE including mathematics and English was higher in 2014 than in previous years. However, it was still low in comparison with the national figure. Current Years 10 and 11 students are typically on track to do better. Nevertheless, students' progress in their option subjects remains quite variable.
- Boys typically do not achieve as well as girls. This is particularly the case in Year 9, where boys' progress in English and mathematics and science is low. Boys do significantly less well than girls in English in all year groups. This is of less concern in Years 7 and 10 where boys make good progress. Year 8 boys are on average making better progress than girls in mathematics and science.
- Disadvantaged students are typically achieving more than previously. In Years 7 and 8 they make good progress. Gaps in achievement between these students and others in the school are small and in some cases closed. In Year 9, where progress overall is not as strong, disadvantaged students are making better progress than others in school in English and science. In Years 10 and 11 disadvantaged students are on track to make progress in English near to that seen for other students nationally. Gaps are also closing in mathematics, although not as strongly as in English. The gap between the proportion of disadvantaged students on track to make expected progress and other students nationally is half that in 2014.
- The gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and others are closing. In 2013, by the end of Key Stage 4, disadvantaged students were almost a grade behind their peers in English and almost two grades behind other students nationally. In 2014 the gap between these students and other students nationally halved to just over a grade. The in-school gap closed to less than half a grade. The attainment gap did not close so well in mathematics. The national gap remained at two grades and the school gap at over a grade. Current students' better progress means the gap between disadvantaged students in the school and others nationally will be narrower by the end of Key Stage 4 this summer.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those who attend the Laurel Centre, in the main make good progress. The leader responsible for disabled students and those with special educational needs (SENCO) works effectively with other leaders and teachers to make sure that students are well supported in their learning. The Years 7 and 8 nurture groups help students with low starting

points to learn well.

- Students who attend the Laurel Centre receive a range of helpful support that gives them the strategies they need to learn well in their mainstream lessons. They typically make good progress.
- The most-able students are making good progress in English and mathematics. They are not making good progress in most other subjects.
- Students who attend Goldwyn School, on balance, make good progress, although progress varies between students and subjects.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSEs.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Students in the sixth form receive a good education. The sixth form is well led. Teaching is effective and students make good progress in academic and vocational subjects.
- Students enjoy coming to school, have positive attitudes to learning and are proud of their sixth form.
- Students' progress in the sixth form has improved over the last three years and is now a little better than that seen nationally in academic and vocational subjects. Most students retaking English and mathematics GCSEs are on track to attain grade C or above in the summer.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good and some is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of students. They have in-depth subject knowledge and impart this effectively to students.
- The head of sixth form carefully tracks students' progress and makes sure extra support is provided when needed. This includes advice and catch-up sessions. Students value the individual support they receive.
- Support in tutor time with such things as curriculum vitae writing, alongside impartial careers advice help students prepare for university and the world of work. All students who study vocational courses undertake work placements. Other students also have opportunities to gain work experience. Almost all students make a successful transition to further study or employment when they leave.
- When not in lessons, students take part in a range of activities that support their own development and enable them to contribute to wider school life. This includes taking part in Duke of Edinburgh Awards, being reading buddies or sports leaders for younger students and getting involved in the student parliament.
- Assemblies and form time help develop students' understanding of the world, the importance of showing tolerance of others and tackling discrimination and how to keep themselves safe.

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	118832
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	461480

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	1248
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Cooke
Headteacher	Nicki Hodges
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 December 2013
Telephone number	01233 6146600
Fax number	01233 612906
Email address	north-school@north.kent.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2015

