

Swadelands School

Ham Lane, Lenham, Kent ME17 2LL

Inspection dates

9–10 December 2015

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires Improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Pupils' achievement is inadequate. The proportion attaining five good GCSE grades, including in English and mathematics, is significantly below the national average and has declined recently. In a range of subjects, too many pupils do not make the progress that they should.
- The gaps in the standards reached and the progress made by disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs, compared with others, are too wide. School information shows that this situation is set to continue for current pupils.
- Leaders have not ensured that assessments of pupils' work and progress are accurate. Until recently, procedures for checking pupils' progress and providing additional support for those who need it have been ineffective.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate. Teaching does not motivate pupils well. Expectations of what pupils, including the most able, can achieve are too low in many lessons and particularly in mathematics.
- Attendance is below average. Too many disadvantaged pupils are persistently absent.
- Low-level disruptive behaviour is common. Teachers and pupils agree that teaching and learning is often disturbed by poor behaviour.
- The headteacher, governors and other leaders have held an inaccurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Consequently, aspects in need of improvement have not been addressed with sufficient alacrity.
- Many staff lack confidence in the school's leaders.

The school has the following strengths

- There are examples of good practice. In a range of subjects, teachers deliver lessons that get the very best from pupils. In these lessons, pupils are highly engaged and their progress is good.
- Outcomes in the sixth form are improving, and teaching and behaviour promote effective learning. The overall effectiveness of the 16 to 19 study programmes requires improvement.
- Leaders' recent self-evaluations are more accurate. Urgent improvement work is being implemented. External support is beginning to make an impact on the quality of teaching.
- Pupils are cared for well. There are effective, understood procedures for keeping pupils safe.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school and particularly in mathematics in order to accelerate pupils' progress and increase standards by:
 - sharing the good practice that already exists within the school to improve teachers' ability to raise standards
 - ensuring that assessments of what pupils know and can do are accurate and that lessons build on this information, so that all groups of pupils are challenged to do their best
 - raising teachers' expectations to ensure that they know clearly that pupils are capable of, and can achieve, more
 - ensuring that gaps between the standards and progress achieved by disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and others, are urgently reduced so that they make the same progress as their peers nationally
 - ensuring that mathematics teachers receive targeted support and urgently act upon the advice given.
- Improve leadership and management, so that they are able to effectively drive standards higher and accelerate the progress pupils make, by:
 - implementing the recently developed rapid action plans and ensuring that these are regularly and rigorously evaluated and amended and used to inform the school's longer term improvement planning
 - ensuring that all members of the school's leadership team are of sufficient calibre, understand clearly the role that they have in securing improvement and know that they will be held to account for the impact of their work
 - ensuring that staff understand what needs to improve and how, what their role is and how they will be supported and held to account
 - ensuring that governors better understand the range of school information that they are given by leaders, and find ways of confirming that it is correct.
- Improve behaviour and attendance by:
 - ensuring that teachers possess the skill and confidence to manage pupils' behaviour effectively
 - ensuring that teachers know how to get help from colleagues and senior staff if they are struggling to manage behaviour
 - ensuring that all staff agree what is and is not acceptable behaviour and apply the agreed school policy for behaviour at all times
 - ensuring that lessons are interesting and engaging and motivate pupils to work hard and attend every day
 - understanding why certain pupils attend so poorly and addressing this in a targeted manner.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Senior leaders, governors and the local authority have all held an unrealistic view of the effectiveness of the school. Leaders' understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school were neither accurate nor insightful enough. Improvements noted at the last inspection have not been sustained. Since that time, standards at the school have fallen considerably.
- The headteacher has not been rigorous enough in checking the work of other leaders in the school. He and the governing body have not had a precise view of pupils' attainment or rates of progress. The school's predictions for examination results in 2015 were overgenerous, including in the key subjects of English and mathematics. As a result of the school's inaccurate assessment information, the very poor results were unanticipated.
- A more rigorous and accurate school evaluation has now been completed, and increasingly ambitious targets for pupils, staff, departments and the school as a whole are being set. Action plans for rapid improvement have been agreed, written and implemented. Although there are positive signs of improvement in some areas, it is too soon for these actions to have made a significant impact on pupils' achievement.
- The school's self-evaluation is still not fully clear or accurate. For example, it does not make explicit that pupils at Swadelands School are not doing nearly as well as their peers who started at similar schools with similar starting points. Consequently, not all leaders, governors or teachers are sufficiently aware of this.
- Teachers' performance has been checked and pay rises have only been granted in relation to successful performance management outcomes. However, teachers do not all agree that performance management has helped them to improve their teaching. Over half of all staff who returned questionnaires indicated that their professional development is not supported well. The school's evaluation that approaching three-quarters of all teaching is at least good is at odds with pupils' poor progress in many subjects over time.
- Leadership is undergoing significant change, with leaders leaving, being recruited or changing role. This contributes to a sense of fragility and lack of cohesion in leadership. Currently, a significant proportion of staff do not consider the school to be well-led or managed. The Chair of the Governing Body is new in post.
- The school has recently begun receiving support directly from, or organised by, the local authority. This has begun to bring improvements within the English department, and has improved systems to track and analyse information about pupils' progress. Leaders can see more clearly where urgent attention is most needed and where improvements are being secured.
- School leaders have used the pupil premium money to provide activities and additional support for particular groups of pupils. However, leaders and governors have not checked closely enough on the difference this funding is making. Gaps in attainment and progress between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in school and nationally, in mathematics and English, remain far too wide. The school's current assessment information indicates that gaps are particularly wide in English, mathematics and science in Years 7, 8 and 10.
- Funding provided specifically to support pupils in Year 7 who did not achieve well at the end of Key Stage 2 has been spent on additional staffing and resources to support pupils to improve their literacy skills. Pupils currently in receipt of this support are making better progress in their reading than previously. Year 7 pupils report feeling strongly supported in making the transition to secondary school.
- The school offers pupils the chance to study an appropriately broad and balanced range of subjects. Pupils are happy with the choices available to them. They report that the one-hour lessons and double periods enable them to get to grips with new learning and really practise practical skills. Departments run a number of clubs and activities, including art, drama and sport at lunchtimes and after school. Trips to the theatre, to London and also abroad offer pupils rich first-hand experiences that bring learning to life.
- Tutor groups are arranged to provide opportunities for pupils to mix and socialise beyond their immediate year group. For example, Years 7 and 8 and Years 9 and 10 meet together. Strong themes of citizenship, preparation for next steps and for life in modern Britain are apparent throughout the curriculum and assemblies. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are further enhanced through school trips and opportunities to take on responsibility, such as being a member of the school council. 'Drop-down days' (when the normal school day is suspended) ensure that all pupils have opportunities to learn and consider aspects of personal, social and health education. This contributes to their sense of well-

being.

- Leaders have created a culture of safety. Pupils know about safety, including personal safety, safe use of the internet, freedom from bullying and discriminatory behaviour. While some pupils report that unpleasant behaviour does occur, pupils express confidence in the school staff to help and support them.
- From time to time, pupils are educated offsite. Arrangements to keep these pupils safe, as well as to ensure that they are making progress, are thorough and effective.
- Strategies to improve the effectiveness of the 16 to 19 provision are proving successful. Following a decline in outcomes in academic subjects for learners in the sixth form, the curriculum has been reviewed. Learners are now making improved progress and in vocational studies achieve as well as other learners nationally. Learners receive effective advice, information and guidance about their studies, how to improve their grades and the options that are open to them when they leave school.
- Only a small minority of parents responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire. Of those who did, approaching half would not recommend Swadelands School.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Until recently, governors have been over-reliant on inaccurate and over-generous information from school leaders. Governors were not sufficiently aware of the school's weaknesses or how the school compared to other, similar schools. Governors have not held leaders sufficiently to account.
 - The Chair of the Governing Body is new in post. He brings highly relevant skills and expertise. There is a strong sense of determination and ambition among governors, coupled with a new air of rigour and resilience. A governing body self-review has recently been conducted and governors are clear about their roles and accountabilities and how they can better hold senior staff to account.
 - Governors have ensured that procedures to safeguard pupils, including checks on staff recruitment, are accurate, secure and up to date.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There are thorough, up-to-date and well-managed procedures for keeping pupils safe. Staff and governors are appropriately trained and everyone knows how to respond and who to turn to when concerns arise. School staff work well with families and agencies to ensure that pupils receive expert help when needed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable across subjects and key stages. This is particularly the case in mathematics, where rates of progress continue to be far too slow for pupils of all ages and abilities. School information indicates that only one fifth of Year 11 pupils are on track to have made expected progress in mathematics by the end of the year.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to achieve are frequently too low. Although all teachers know pupils have varying degrees of ability, work has not been well enough adapted to suit pupils' different needs. Inspectors observed lessons where pupils of all abilities were presented with the same task and lessons moved with little sense of pace or challenge. Lessons such as these fail to motivate pupils to do their best. As a result, the pattern of slow progress in some subjects continues.
- Pupils' workbooks provide further evidence that progress is variable and expectations are too low. A significant proportion of workbooks are poorly presented with frequent examples of unfinished work. Although the school has an agreed marking and feedback policy, this is not consistently applied and pupils do not receive consistently good advice about how to improve their work.
- Low-level disruption in lessons hampers learning and slows progress. Too many teachers lack confidence in their ability to manage behaviour. Consequently, unacceptable behaviours, including calling out, shouting at the teacher and throwing objects, go unstopped. In one Year 9 mathematics lesson, pupils were observed to be rude and disrespectful to their teacher and sprayed deodorant. Not all teachers consistently follow the school behaviour policy. Pupils therefore learn that they can behave differently in different situations.
- Pupils in receipt of additional support through the pupil premium or arising from special educational needs have their learning in group sessions closely monitored. Pupils receiving targeted support typically make good progress when working in the small group. However, too often this success is not replicated or built upon in the classroom as teachers do not adapt tasks or provide effective support.
- Pupils who display challenging behaviour, including some who require high levels of support to participate

in learning, spend time working individually or in small groups with adult support in the student drop-in centre. Their effort and progress is monitored closely. This information is shared with families and other teachers, with a view to pupils returning to their own class full-time when possible. A strong focus is placed on developing essential reading, writing and numeracy skills. Evidence indicates that these pupils are making faster progress than they did previously. However, their attainment is typically very low.

- The provision for any pupils who are educated off-site is carefully agreed, monitored and evaluated by leaders. Evidence indicates that, from very low starting points, these pupils make better progress in this provision than previously in their education.
- There are signs that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is beginning to rise. Teachers are starting to be more consistent and effective in preparing for lessons. They are identifying the purpose of lessons more clearly, alongside the activities pupils will complete, and how the lesson will proceed from introduction to conclusion. In lessons, pupils are more frequently engaged in discussing their learning with adults and peers and in reviewing their own progress. Teachers more regularly use careful, planned questioning to check for pupils' understanding and to encourage them to think more deeply. All of these positive features were present in a Year 7 drama lesson where pupils worked with endeavour to learn and present a monologue.
- Assessment routines have been reviewed. In some cases, including within the English department, teachers are using the information strategically to plug gaps in learning as well as to ensure that lessons move with greater pace and appropriate challenge. This rapid improvement is not replicated within the mathematics department.
- In lessons and subjects where pupils make good progress, teachers possess good subject knowledge, plan exciting lessons and inspire pupils to think for themselves. This was seen in a Year 10 science lesson, where students worked in groups to consider and report on the ethics of genetic engineering. Teachers have not had opportunities to observe such examples of good practice.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils wear their uniform smartly and most get to their lessons punctually. Pupils understand that their attitudes affect how well they learn, but this does not always translate into positive behaviour.
- Pupils mostly feel safe in school. This is because pupils know who to go to and how to get help should they be concerned.
- School records show that significant bullying behaviour on the playground earlier this academic year has been successfully addressed by the school. Records demonstrate that use of derogatory language, including racist or homophobic language, is firmly dealt with when disclosed.
- Pupils receive regular guidance about how to live healthily and stay safe, including online and in lessons, such as in practical science when using chemicals. Pupils are developing an understanding of extremism through assemblies and the school's personal, social and health education programme.
- The school works well to help pupils when they become particularly vulnerable. Staff understand the range of issues that can affect young people, including mental health issues. The school works actively with other agencies and any alternative providers of education in pupils' best interests. Leaders check that wherever pupils are being supported outside the classroom, a strong focus is placed on their personal development and welfare.
- Pupils receive useful guidance about their future career and educational options. Older learners consider their futures and aspirations carefully. Learners report being extremely well-supported in their decision making about their next steps beyond school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- The low-level disruptive behaviour observed by inspectors in lessons was confirmed by pupils as typical. Teachers' responses to the inspection questionnaire confirm significant staff concerns with poor pupil behaviour.
- When teaching is poorly matched to pupils' levels of ability and when teachers and supply staff lack the confidence, skill or knowledge to manage pupils' behaviour well, behaviour ranges from inattentive to significantly disruptive. Too often, pupils ignore adults and their directions. Some pupils are disrespectful

and occasionally aggressive towards each other or adults.

- Overall attendance is low, although it has increased recently. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is well above the national average, and disadvantaged pupils are the most likely to be persistently absent. School strategies to tackle this have not made enough difference.
- Fixed-term exclusions have reduced significantly this academic year. As an alternative, the school is providing intensive support within the student drop-in building. This ensures that pupils still access appropriate education while being away from their peers. In this environment and when accessing alternative provision, pupils' behaviour is monitored and is typically better than their behaviour in class. There continue to be more exclusions at Swadelands than at most schools.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Overall, pupils do not make enough progress. Examination results in 2015 indicate that pupils' rates of progress have declined significantly since 2013. Standards of attainment and rates of progress are well below those found nationally.
- Regardless of their academic starting points, pupils from many different groups such as girls, boys and the disadvantaged, have all made consistently poor progress in the key subjects of English, mathematics and science. In some subjects, however, such as languages, art and design, media studies and religious studies, rates of progress and standards reached have been equal to, and even above, national averages.
- In the 2014 GCSE examinations, only 31% of pupils gained five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics. In 2015, this declined further to 26%. This is far below the average figure of 56%. The school is highly unlikely to meet the government's floor standards for 2015 when they are published. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment at GCSE and their progress in English and mathematics.
- The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally is far too wide. In English, mathematics and science, disadvantaged pupils achieve at least a whole GCSE grade less than their peers nationally. This is despite the school receiving significant additional funding from the pupil premium to raise their achievement.
- Many pupils underachieve because expectations of them are too low, and leaders and teachers have not supported or challenged them well enough to succeed. The proportion of more-able pupils attaining high GCSE grades is low. In too many lessons, higher-ability pupils are insufficiently challenged to achieve as well as they could.
- Current pupils with disabilities and special educational needs are making inadequate progress. Strategies used successfully in small group support lessons, where progress is made, are not consistently transferred into the classroom. Learning tasks are not always effectively adapted for these pupils.
- The progress of current pupils, as evident in workbooks and in the school's own assessment information, shows that in some subjects, including mathematics, there is little sign of improvement. However, in other subjects, such as English, leaders and teachers are determined to secure improvement. Teachers are using assessment information carefully and lessons are planned to ensure that pupils cover new ground but also to plug gaps in previous learning.
- Overall, by the end of Year 11, pupils are not well prepared academically for their next stages in education, training or employment.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Provision for learners in the sixth form is better than in other parts of the school and is continuing to improve.
- Teaching, learning and assessment have been variable over time. In academic subjects, in particular, learners have not made sufficient progress and examination results have been poor.
- Leaders have taken significant steps to identify precisely, and remedy, weaknesses. For example, leaders took the decision to remove all A Level study options for a year while a review was held. There are currently no learners in Year 13 studying A Level courses. The school's data and observations in lessons indicate that learners in Year 12 studying academic subjects are currently making expected progress.
- School data, information provided by staff and learners and observations during lessons shows that those studying vocational courses, such as dance, typically make expected or better progress and are achieving

standards close to average.

- Learners in the sixth form are proud of their school and of their own achievements. They receive helpful careers guidance and opportunities for work experience, which broaden their learning and give them greater confidence in making choices about the future. Very few learners drop out during the course of sixth form studies. The school knows exactly which courses, training or employment learners move on to. All learners who left in July 2015 had an appropriate onward route, with the majority choosing to move into higher education.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is better than in other parts of the school. Learners understand that staff are there to help them and that everyone wants to do well. Learners are confident that they are safe in school and that they continue to learn about online safety, personal safety and well-being.
- English and mathematical skills are reinforced in different subject areas. Those learners who enter the sixth form without a good GCSE grade in English or mathematics are supported well to improve their grades.

School details

Unique reference number	118793
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10000553

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 non-selective
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	650
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Phillips
Headteacher	Richard Baddeley
Telephone number	01622858267
Website	www.swadelands.kent.sch.uk
Email address	admin@swadelands.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 October 2012

Information about this school

- Swadelands is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. It is non-selective and serves Maidstone, Ashford and surrounding Kent villages.
- The vast majority of pupils 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 disadvantaged students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education and health care plan is above average.
- Pupils' attainment on entry to Year 7 is significantly lower than average.
- The school uses rooms in the student drop-in centre, known as Reach and Reset, to provide time and space away from other pupils following incidents of poor behaviour or in cases where students need higher levels of on-going support to engage in learning.
- The school uses Goldwyn School in Ashford as a provider of alternative education.
- The headteacher and leaders of Thamesview School are providing a package of support to Swadelands School.
- Swadelands School is the hub for the Mid-Kent and Maidstone School Games. The school provides advice

and guidance on physical education to local primary schools.

- In 2014, the school did not meet the government's floor standard for the minimum expectations of attainment and progress at GCSE.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed in many lessons across a range of subjects and in all year groups. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work in different subjects and spoke to pupils from all key stages about their experiences of learning and school life. Inspectors evaluated the 50 responses received to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentary information, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, information relating to pupils' attainment and progress, records of behavioural incidents and the information available on the school website.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, senior and middle leaders, and teaching staff. Inspectors also took account of the views of staff from the 32 questionnaires returned to them.
- Inspectors considered the parental views expressed in the 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

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