

The Malling School

Beech Road, East Malling, West Malling, Kent ME19 6DH

Inspection dates

18 to 19 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The rate of pupils' progress, based on GCSE results, including in English and mathematics, declined from 2016 and was very low in 2018.
- While leaders have acted to deal with weaknesses in the teaching of science, pupils' progress is still too variable, especially those in key stage 4.
- Some teachers do not consistently follow their subjects' assessment policy robustly enough. As a result, pupils sometimes make errors that are not addressed.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. In previous years, leaders did not address these matters robustly enough by dealing with weak teaching.
- Although rapidly improving, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent in several subjects.
- While improvements are in place, challenge for all pupils, including the most able, is not embedded fully.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has a clear vision and drive for the school to be good. He is well supported by other leaders, governors and staff. Capacity for further improvement is good.
- Leaders and governors are increasingly rigorous in tackling underperformance and are taking effective action that is leading to improvements in teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have a high level of expertise in safeguarding. They make a positive difference to pupils' welfare. Pupils feel safe.
- Behaviour in the school is now good following concerted actions by all adults.
- Most middle leaders have a strong focus on improving teaching and learning. They receive effective ongoing training from senior leaders.
- Pupils benefit from helpful careers education, advice, information and guidance. Their personal development is promoted well.
- Provision and outcomes in the sixth form are good, and students learn well. Virtually all students who complete the sixth form go on to further education, apprenticeships or employment.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, so that all pupils make consistently strong progress across the school, by ensuring that:
 - the planned curriculum is challenging for all students, contains valid and reliable assessments and develops appropriate vocabulary
 - effective questioning techniques that check pupils' understanding, improve knowledge retention and challenge students to think deeply are fully implemented
 - the systems to give feedback to pupils are fully effective to diagnose weaknesses and allow effective reteaching of misunderstandings, and are embedded in all subjects.
- Improve standards of attainment in key stage 4, especially in science, by:
 - making sure that gaps in pupils' learning are filled so that all pupils can reach the standards of which they are capable
 - strengthening the planned curriculum so that it provides more opportunities for pupils to deepen their knowledge and apply their skills across a range of subjects
 - ensuring consistently strong progress is achieved for all pupils, including those with high starting points.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, in post since September 2018, has acted quickly with clear resolve to rectify a deterioration in pupils' performance over the past two years. His passion to lead a good school is supported well by other senior leaders, staff and governors. He took early decisions to replace staff who were not effective in their roles, and the school is rapidly improving.
- Leaders and governors have a well-founded and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. From this, along with governors, leaders have set the right priorities for improving pupils' behaviour, and the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. The effects of these plans are monitored well now by leaders. The series of strategies in place are beginning to have a positive effect on overall standards. Behaviour is now good.
- Evidence collected during the inspection shows that progress towards achieving these priorities has been effective so far. While the school is not yet good overall, sizeable improvements have been made to the quality of education that the school provides. The capacity for further improvement is good.
- Leaders have prioritised the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment. They have introduced well-thought-out strategies, realistically designed to ensure that high standards are consistently present in all lessons. For example, leaders have introduced 'knowledge organisers' in lessons so that pupils have a record of the subject-specific vocabulary that they have to remember. The organisers contain the appropriate subject vocabulary but there is more work to be done on the application of terminology in lessons, particularly for the most able. Improvements to the quality of teaching across the school have not been consistently applied. The school's work in developing subject-specific marking and feedback policies does not yet consistently provide pupils with help or opportunities to correct errors or improve their work. Thus, good progress is not fully assured.
- The curriculum is now broad and balanced. Leaders identified that there were some deficiencies in the curriculum at the start of this academic year. They introduced changes to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to study a wide range of subjects. In key stage 4, the most able pupils are now able to study Latin as a formal part of their curriculum. In addition, a suitable range of vocational subjects is available to meet pupils' needs.
- The school's assessment system links closely to the impact of the teaching of the curriculum on pupils' learning and progress in different subjects. However, the approaches are not used consistently enough yet to ensure good progress overall.
- Middle leadership across the school continues to develop. Leadership in science has lacked stability in recent times and pupils made limited progress. However, leaders have set clear targets for improvements in this area, including support plans for teachers where practice has been weak. Other middle leaders are becoming confident in talking about how well staff teach the curriculum in their subject areas. Teachers are more fully able to account for the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.

- Leadership of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has improved over the past year. Provision is precisely planned so that extra support is targeted towards pupils who need it. In particular, leadership in the Tydeman Centre, the resource unit for pupils with speech, language and communications needs, is effective.
- Staff morale is high. All staff that responded to Ofsted's questionnaire agreed that the school is well led and managed. Leaders have worked hard to ensure that staff feel motivated and supported. All respondents welcomed the improvements that have been made. Leaders have astutely considered staff workload when introducing new practices.
- Extra funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent increasingly effectively. In the past, disadvantaged pupils have not made good progress. Nevertheless, recent changes to the pupil premium provision mean that current disadvantaged pupils are making better progress. Actions such as the help provided to build their resilience and to provide additional support aimed at their individual learning needs are in place.
- Leaders have developed systems to support pupils as they prepare for their next steps beyond school. Leaders make sure pupils are offered a range of options that are aspirational and focused on individuals' strengths. As a result, nearly all the pupils who completed key stage 4 in 2018 went into education, employment or training.
- Teachers who are new to the profession feel supported and valued, both within their subjects and from senior leaders. They have the necessary skills needed at this stage in their careers.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school has become much more effective since it has had detailed and accurate information on which to challenge school leaders effectively. Until this year governors were not fully able to influence plans for improvement well enough.
- Now, they are increasingly holding school leaders at all levels to account and asking challenging questions of them, especially about pupils' performance. Governors have been instrumental in setting the current priorities for school improvement with leaders.
- Recent changes to the composition of the governing body to a 'Circle' model, where all are involved fully in decision making, has improved governors' capacity to use their skills and knowledge well. They have strengthened links with other leaders and staff across the school.
- Governors make regular visits to the school to monitor priorities thoroughly. They are ambitious for the school, insisting that the progress that pupils make improves rapidly while maintaining the ethos of support for, and personal welfare of, all pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has a culture of vigilance, led well by the safeguarding team. The team ensures that staff are well trained and know how to bring any concerns about pupils to their attention. This helps to ensure that pupils

get early help when they need it.

- Safeguarding leaders analyse information for any patterns of concerns and pursue these issues with a wide range of teams and agencies. Leaders adapt learning and support for pupils based on their analyses. As a result, pupils are helped to understand the risks to their well-being, for example regarding the dangers of misuse of drugs or alcohol.
- Those responsible for governance receive regular updates and analysis of safeguarding concerns. They challenge school leaders about how well teams work with other agencies, for example. They also ensure that all the required pre-employment checks are carried out and recorded appropriately on a single central register.
- Pupils report that they usually feel safe in school. They say that the school helps them to understand how to keep safe, including when using digital technologies. Pupils are also confident that staff listen to and help them if they have a concern.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Leaders have taken increasingly well-planned, rapid and robust action to improve the quality of teaching, which is beginning to have an impact. Until earlier this school year, teaching had not successfully improved pupils' progress, particularly at key stage 4.
- Teachers did not have high enough expectations of pupils' learning in lessons. Planning did not pay sufficient attention to what pupils had previously learned, meaning that many pupils did not have the opportunities to deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding. As a result, pupils in Year 11 had substantial gaps in their learning. Correctly, leaders sought to remedy this shortfall through a well-planned, detailed and rigorous catch-up programme attended by many pupils in 'Lesson 1', an early period used to prepare pupils for the day ahead.
- More effective teaching is now clearly evident across the school. In several subjects, teachers use their subject knowledge well to increase pupils' knowledge, develop their skills and make sure they understand what they are learning. Teachers use questioning skilfully to check pupils' understanding and develop deeper thinking, as was seen in a Year 7 history lesson, where pupils had to consider why Mary, Queen of Scots had to die, and they provided good answers based on their research.
- Despite overall improvement, not enough teaching focuses well enough on helping pupils to gain knowledge, improve their understanding or develop their skills. At such times, pupils do not make good progress. Pupils are sometimes unable to apply their learning or recall what they have already been taught. On occasion, the learning needs of some pupils, particularly for most able pupils, are not met well enough. These pupils do not, therefore, make the progress they should. Strong practice, such as that found in humanities, is not widespread enough.
- Not enough teachers follow their subject's marking and feedback policy. Pupils are not provided with help or opportunities to correct errors or improve their work as is often evident in science. In some subjects, however, pupils receive valuable feedback from their teacher, and improve their work accordingly. This was seen to be consistently strong in, for example, humanities and psychology.
- In the Tydeman Centre, teaching is effective. Here, learning assistants are used effectively to support pupils' learning. This has a positive impact in lessons and

encourages those pupils who receive support to be confident and enthusiastic learners. Elsewhere in the school, pupils with SEND are taught with increasing accuracy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are confident and happy, applying themselves well to their learning in many lessons. Relationships between adults and pupils are typically strong. Pupils are positive about their school, feeling that staff know them really well, which helps them to flourish. Many pupils take part in, and benefit from, the extensive range of trips that support their learning, as well as developing social bonds.
- The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme is detailed and varied. Years 7 and 8 pupils follow an ethics course, and older pupils study a citizenship programme. These help prepare them well for life outside school. Pupils participate in a range of activities which help to promote their personal development and understanding of British values.
- The school also holds the bronze status for UNICEF's Rights Respecting Award, and pupils say their voice on important local, national and international matters is treated respectfully, particularly through the Lesson 1 sessions. The school is currently reviewing the content of this programme to ensure it is having a good impact overall.
- Pupils develop an open and tolerant approach to others who come from different backgrounds to their own, including those with different religious beliefs, cultural traditions or who come from different family backgrounds. Pupils' learning about healthy personal relationships is developed systematically across the school.
- A majority of parents support the view that children are safe and well cared for. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and know how to keep safe, for example online. They said that they can talk to staff, who would help them if they have any concerns. Pupils were clear that the few instances of bullying are dealt with well by adults. A small number of pupils attending the Tydeman Centre, however, were less sure that their concerns were always listened to.
- A very well mapped-out careers education and guidance programme provides high-quality advice across all years. Well-qualified careers advisers give detailed and up-to-date advice as well as organising successful careers fairs. All school trips identify different work roles that pupils are likely to come across.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. One of the new leadership team's priorities was to deal with low-level disruption that was evident in the school. The application of the school's 'State, Warn, Apply, Transfer (SWAT)' policy has been overwhelmingly welcomed by staff; its application has been largely successful.
- Staff and pupils confirm that leaders have improved pupils' behaviour well this year. However, a few Year 10 pupils felt that some pupils' behaviour still disrupted their learning, often in classes with agency or supply teachers. About 20% of responses in

Ofsted's Parent View survey felt that behaviour was not good enough.

- Inspectors saw pupils behaving well in most lessons, focusing well on their work and learning well. They listen to their teachers and follow instructions promptly, showing a pride in their work. Where teachers challenge pupils to work independently on demanding tasks that are clearly explained, behaviour is exemplary. In a small number of classes, pupils were observed doodling in their books, losing interest in their learning.
- At breaktimes, and when moving between lessons, most pupils behave well, showing politeness towards adults by, for example, holding doors open and welcoming guests. Pupils were insistent that the school strongly promotes diversity and tackles discriminatory language and behaviour. The school's system for logging and recording behaviour incidents, including homophobic, bullying and racist episodes, is robust. Fewer pupils are now referred to the Transfer Room than earlier in the year.
- The rate of fixed-term exclusions is now well below the national average from a higher rate last year. No permanent exclusions have happened in the last two years.
- The school's work on improving attendance has largely been successful, as figures show that absence is now in line with national averages, as is the level of persistent absence. However, the attendance of several disadvantaged pupils still requires improvement.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 entered the school with well-below-average levels of attainment. In Year 7, pupils joined the school with attainment just below national averages.
- In 2018, overall attainment at GCSE was in the lowest 10% for all schools nationally. The proportions of pupils who entered and attained the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) qualification were well below average. The decline in GCSE outcomes for Year 11 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, continued from 2017. This represented significantly below-average progress across many subjects and for groups, including boys, disadvantaged pupils, and the most able.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics, English, science and EBacc was significantly below the national average in 2018, and in the bottom 20% nationally for the last two years. This was a decline from the broadly average progress made in 2016, and was due to weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders, including middle leaders, are taking action to eliminate the variations in pupils' progress in different subjects, with some early success that needs to accelerate. Leaders responded quickly to the very low performance in 2018 by instigating catch-up sessions, master classes and a range of other support for the current Year 11 that has meant that they are significantly better prepared for their examinations.
- Extensive staff training, additional support for underachieving pupils, and better staffing have led to improved progress for current pupils in most subjects, especially in key stage 3. Current progress in humanities, English and sports studies is good as a result of more effective teaching and learning. The most able pupils are making better progress now, but are not performing as well as expected due to teaching not being

sufficiently consistently challenging.

- The progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND has also been limited, despite the additional support from the pupil premium funding. However, pupils currently in the school are catching up and making better progress because of a number of interventions to support these pupils.
- Inspectors' scrutiny of a large sample of pupils' work in pupils' books, across a wide range of subjects, and in all key stages, shows that progress for current pupils, although improving, is variable.
- However, pupils who attend the Tydeman Centre make good progress, especially in their social and emotional skills. Their needs are met well in the centre.
- Leaders provide pupils with effective advice and guidance to help them choose their next steps. An above-average number of pupils at the end of Year 11 either join the sixth form, begin an apprenticeship or go on to study elsewhere.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Sixth-form students make good progress from their starting points. They achieve particularly well in their International Baccalaureate, and students taking functional skills courses also achieve well.
- Students appreciate the wide range of courses that they can follow across a suitable range of subjects. Students also benefit from guidance that helps them choose subjects that are a good match for their interests, aspirations and abilities.
- Teaching in the sixth form shows many strengths. Inspection evidence, including that gained through talking to students and looking at their work, shows that teachers' secure subject knowledge, high expectations and skilful questioning are extending students' learning well. It was clear, during the inspection, that this helped history students understand clearly why apartheid laws had been introduced in South Africa.
- Many students develop their leadership skills through the positions of responsibility that they hold at school. Students run school events, raise money for charity, and help to support younger pupils with their learning.
- Sixth-form students gain well from a detailed programme of guidance and activities to suit their diverse needs, including enhancing their employability skills. Virtually all students make successful applications for apprenticeships, employment or higher education. Retention between Year 12 and 13 is generally strong, with several male students gaining apprenticeship places at the end of Year 12.
- While the PSHE education programme is well planned, few students were aware of matters such as radicalisation or extremism. The school has put actions in place to deal with this.
- Students behave well during their lessons, when completing private study and at social times. They are positive role models for younger pupils at the school. Students told inspectors that they value highly the positive and productive relationships that they have with their teachers. They feel, and are, safe and well supported.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good and developing well. Students' progress is regularly tracked and monitored by leaders. They act quickly to provide appropriate

and timely support to individuals who are falling behind. Vulnerable students are well provided for, especially those who attend The Tydeman Centre.

- Attendance improved this year but is still below the national average. The school has instigated the same stepped approach to improving attendance as in the rest of the school and it has made a good impact. The sixth-form team is confident that attendance will continue to improve next year.

School details

Unique reference number	118897
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10053063

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	879
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Perry
Headteacher	John Vennart
Telephone number	01732 840 995
Website	www.themallingschool.kent.sch.uk
Email address	Headteacher@themallingschool.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 to 7 May 2015

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school, with a small sixth form. There are more boys than girls. It is a non-selective school in an area with selective schools.
- Most students attending the school are White British. A below-average proportion of students are from several different minority ethnic groups.
- A very low proportion of students speak English as an additional language, of whom only a few are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of students who receive support through the pupil premium is above

average.

- About a quarter of Year 7 students receive catch-up funding, which is for students who did not attain the nationally expected level in English or mathematics at the end of primary school.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is very high. The school has a specially resourced unit, the Tydeman Centre, for 90 students who have statements of special educational needs for speech, language and communication needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons across key stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form. Senior leaders joined inspectors in the many of these observations.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a local authority representative and four governors.
- Inspectors met formally with groups of pupils from across the whole school. Inspectors also spoke to a wide range of pupils during social times and during lessons, and considered the views of 29 pupils who responded to the confidential pupils' questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff from meetings with groups of staff and from the 87 staff who responded to the confidential staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 66 parents who responded to the confidential Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, including 60 free-text responses.
- Documentation was scrutinised by inspectors, including the school's plans for improvement, its self-evaluation, reports on attendance and behaviour, records relating to pupils' safety, minutes of the board of trustees' meetings, and information on pupils' performance.

Inspection team

Hugh Betterton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Frederick Valletta	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Storey	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Fearon	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Rodin	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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