

# Inspection of The Lenham School

Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone, Kent ME17 2LL

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Inspection dates: 5–6 November 2019

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

This is a good school where pupils' academic and social success are important to leaders and staff. The headteacher's 'open door' policy allows pupils, parents and staff to discuss their concerns and share their ideas. Everyone knows that their voice will be heard, and that issues will be resolved effectively.

Pupils behave well in and out of lessons. They are respectful and supportive of each other. As a result, there is a calm and orderly atmosphere around the school. Pupils learn well in a secure, friendly and supportive setting.

Expectations are high. The school is a recognised International Baccalaureate school. It offers an extensive curriculum. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils are happy and safe. Bullying is rare, and when it does occur it is dealt with very quickly. Pupils say that they are proud of their school. They work with purpose and commitment. Pupils' determined attitudes are having a positive impact on their achievement.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The headteacher, supported by teachers and governors, has 'turned the school around' since his appointment. Pupils, parents and staff confirm that behaviour and attitudes are much improved. Behaviour seen, inside and outside of lessons, was extremely good. Pupils went out of their way to be helpful. In lessons, they were attentive and engaged. Most parents agree that pupils are well behaved.

Leaders and staff want all pupils to achieve well. They have created an ambitious and carefully considered curriculum. Pupils study a suitably wide range of subjects. Some departments' subject plans are well developed. This is particularly true for science, technology, drama and physical education, for example. Subject plans for mathematics are less well advanced.

The school curriculum aligns well with the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). The EBacc includes subjects considered essential for further education and employment. The proportion of pupils studying the EBacc is already very close to government recommendations.

Teachers know their subjects well. As a result, pupils develop knowledge, skills and confidence across their learning. Committed teaching and the increasingly well-planned curriculum mean that pupils achieve well. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, for whom the curriculum is suitably adapted. The learning of disadvantaged pupils is improving.

Pupils' personal development is well supported through assemblies and tutor time. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highlighted across the curriculum, especially in drama. Pupils said that tutor time is valuable and well used. Inspectors agree. Pupils particularly enjoy the sessions on leadership, teamwork and

independence. They said that bullying is rare. Teachers encourage them to respect people from other backgrounds.

Year 11 pupils spoke positively about the comprehensive careers programme. Year 13 students also have one-to-one careers meetings. As a result, pupils and students are well prepared for their future. Last year, all pupils went on to some form of education, employment or training.

Sixth-form students enjoy school, attend regularly and achieve well. They are very positive about their studies. In the sixth form, they choose from a range of academic and vocational courses. They also have opportunities to resit their GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. The recently introduced International Baccalaureate course is a popular choice.

Teachers have high expectations of students. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, and their enthusiasm is evident. As a result, students speak highly of the teaching and the new curriculum. Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves well. Students confirm that teachers show interest in their well-being and mental health. When they leave school, most students proceed to university, apprenticeships or employment.

Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, staff are not always well informed about the school's priorities. Trustees of the multi-academy trust have a clear vision for the school. Governors and school leaders are considerate of teachers' workload. Staff feel well supported. They appreciate the opportunity to speak with leaders when they have any concerns.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are well informed, and safeguarding is a high priority. Leaders take their responsibilities for pupils' safety very seriously. They carefully check the suitability of adults working at school. All staff receive appropriate training. They have a good awareness of pupils' individual needs. Staff are trained well to look out for pupils' welfare. The school's safeguarding policies and procedures are clear and detailed. Staff and pupils know who to inform if they have any concerns.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The revised plans for what pupils should learn are relatively new and not yet fully established across the school. Leaders need to ensure that effective subject-specific curriculums are implemented fully. This will ensure that pupils achieve well and successfully build the essential knowledge for each subject. In mathematics, for example, curriculum plans should provide teachers with enough detail about what pupils need to learn and when. When developing and finessing

plans, curriculum leaders should consider carefully how pupils will build on what they already know.

- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Self-evaluation is used well to decide developments. However, staff are not always well informed about the school's priorities, how success will be measured and time scales for their completion. Senior leaders, including governors, should ensure that the whole staff team is well informed about these plans, to support the contributions of members of staff to the intended improvement.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	143954
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10111405
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	602
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	57
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Chris Norwood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Chris Foreman
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thelenham.viat.org.uk">www.thelenham.viat.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school achieved academy status in January 2017, as part of the Valley Invicta Academies Trust (VIAT). It was previously known as Swadelands School. At the last inspection of the predecessor school, it was rated as inadequate.
- The headteacher has been in post since January 2016. However, most school leaders and governors have only been in post for about one year.
- The school introduced the International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme into the sixth form from September 2019.
- The number of pupils attending the school has continued to rise over the past three years, so that Years 7 and 8 are now full.
- A small number of pupils carry out part of their learning at other schools, including the Maidstone and Malling Alternative Provision, Kent Health Needs Dover Hub and Apricot Learning Online.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the headteacher, deputy headteachers and the chief executive officer. The lead inspector talked to three governors. He asked them about how they support and challenge school leaders.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, technology and geography. We met with subject leaders and visited lessons. Inspectors talked to pupils, looked at books and held discussions with subject teachers.
- We held meetings with subject leaders from other subjects, including sixth-form leaders. Inspectors looked at information about attendance, behaviour, safeguarding and enrichment activities.
- We walked around the school to check on punctuality, behaviour and conduct. During these times, we held informal discussions with pupils. Inspectors also spoke to different members of staff, including new teachers.
- We scrutinised the recruitment checks that the school makes on adults who work in the school. Inspectors talked to senior leaders responsible for safeguarding. They looked at records of the actions they have taken to protect pupils at risk.
- We spoke to pupils to gauge how safe they felt and to what extent they know how to keep themselves safe. Inspectors also checked whether members of staff understand and abide by the school's safeguarding policy.
- A small number of students attend education at other schools. We rang the schools to talk about their curriculum and how they ensure the safety of pupils.
- We took account of the 99 responses and 87 comments from the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. We also considered 320 responses from the online pupils' survey and 31 responses to the online survey for staff.

## Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Eliot Hodges	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Fearon	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Lee	Ofsted Inspector

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