

Inspection of Rainham Mark Grammar School

Pump Lane, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent ME8 7AJ

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 May 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at this school appreciate that their teachers are passionate and highly knowledgeable about their subjects. There is a strong focus on academic success in the school but creative and practical subjects are also highly valued.

Pupils feel safe in school. Behaviour in lessons is focused and pupils feel that their teachers listen to what they have to say. Bullying is not common at the school and is dealt with quickly when reported. Pupils appreciate that there are a range of different people they can speak to if they are worried. They say that the majority of pupils at the school are kind to each other. They are taught about diversity and are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Pupils have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities from Years 7 to 13, which reflect their broad range of interests and ambitions. The arts are a particular strength. Talking about school productions, one pupil said, 'They are big events that bring the whole school together as a community.' However, not all pupils are aware of what is on offer and many say they do not attend any clubs or activities. They are excited to see that the full range of sports teams are returning following the pandemic.

Most parents would recommend the school and say their children are happy there. One parent reflected the views of many in telling us, 'My children are thriving at the school and are thoroughly enjoying secondary school life.'

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

Change in leadership has brought about a renewed focus on the school's curriculum. Leaders have considered what pupils should learn in each subject and in what order. This means that what pupils learn in Years 7 to 11 prepares them well for sixth form. Leaders are ambitious about what pupils should know and remember as they progress through the school. They have provided training for teachers that draws on research about what makes teaching effective. They have rightly thought about strategies that benefit all pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Some of the initiatives they have introduced are not yet fully embedded. Leaders have put in place well-considered training to ensure that the quality of teaching is more consistent across all lessons.

Leaders have been slow to identify a small number of pupils who need more help with their reading. As a result, these pupils have had limited support to enable them to catch up with their peers. Leaders recognise that this work needs to be more urgent and they are in the process of making improvements.

Pupils benefit from an effective programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. School leaders have ensured that the lessons pupils receive are relevant to pupils and prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Pupils talk

knowledgeably about topics such as healthy relationships, consent and the dangers of addiction. As part of this programme, pupils receive some careers education. This is supplemented by opportunities to meet with employers and representatives from colleges and universities. This work is particularly effective in the sixth form and pupils appreciate the support they receive with specialist career pathways or applications to higher education. Some pupils in Years 8 to 11 do not take up the school's offer of a personal careers interview and so are not as well informed as other pupils about the next steps available to them.

Pupil leadership and mentoring opportunities are a strength of the school. Students in the sixth form enjoy opportunities to support younger pupils. Some of this support is academic, but students are also trained to provide social and emotional support to those who need it.

Behaviour in school is calm and orderly, especially in lessons where pupils focus well and are keen to learn. Sometimes there is more boisterous behaviour at lunchtimes but leaders deal with this well and have put in place effective strategies such as increased supervision. Incidents of discrimination or harassment between pupils are rare. When they do occur, leaders look into them quickly and respond effectively to make sure they are not repeated.

Trustees and governors understand their roles well and are determined to bring about improvements in the school. Working alongside leaders, they have established a clear vision for the school's next steps which is rightly focused on the quality of education pupils receive and their personal development. They recognise that there is a need for a more strategic approach in a number of areas and are in the process of bringing this about quickly and sustainably. Leaders have managed the pace of change in the school well. Staff feel supported and valued. They say their workload is properly considered when leaders make decisions or introduce new ideas.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise safeguarding in the school. Policies are clear and implemented effectively. All staff receive formal training and regular updates so that they know how to identify concerns. They use their training well and report issues, even when they seem minor. Leaders act quickly when children need help. They are persistent in securing support and working with external agencies. When appointing new staff, leaders follow safer recruitment processes closely and carry out the necessary pre-employment checks. Governors look at these records and check that safeguarding systems are effective in school. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe through a carefully considered PSHE programme.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have introduced a number of changes in relation to the curriculum and the way it is delivered. They should continue with their plans for training staff and evaluating the effectiveness of this work. This will help to make sure that some of the excellent practice in the school becomes more consistent and benefits all pupils.
- Leaders have been slow to identify those pupils who need more help with their reading. They should make sure that this is a greater priority and these pupils are identified as a matter of urgency in Year 7. This will mean that support can be put in place more quickly to help these pupils catch up with their peers.
- Not all pupils benefit from personal careers guidance because leaders have not made sure this is compulsory. Leaders should ensure that all pupils receive a personal careers interview before the age of 16. This is a statutory requirement so that all pupils are encouraged to consider their next steps and future employment.
- Not all pupils are aware of the school's extra-curricular clubs and many do not take part. Leaders should think strategically about how to increase participation and monitor the impact of this work. This will ensure that as many pupils as possible benefit from the wide range of opportunities already provided by the school.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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 are the school and you are 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

Unique reference number	136864
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10202705
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1537
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	363
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nathan Ward
Headteacher	Lisa Barker
Website	www.rainhammark.com
Date of previous inspection	19 January 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since September the school has undergone significant changes in leadership and governance. This includes the appointment of a new headteacher, a new chief executive officer and significant changes to the organisation of the trust and school governance.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school fulfils the requirements of the Baker clause by providing pupils with impartial advice on post-16 study options including local colleges, apprenticeships and vocational routes.

Information about this inspection

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

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the trust chief executive officer, the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, teachers, non-teaching staff and pupils. In addition, the lead inspector met with trustees and governors including the chair of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: art, English, geography, languages, mathematics and religious education (RE). For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with safeguarding leaders including the designated safeguarding lead, looked at records, policies and processes relating to safeguarding and talked to pupils, staff and governors about this aspect of the school's work. Inspectors also reviewed records of the checks the school carry out on new staff.
- Inspectors met with many pupils and took into consideration responses to the pupil and parent surveys, including a number of written comments from parents.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation including school policies, leaders' plans for improving the school, minutes of governing body meetings and records of attendance and behaviour incidents.

Inspection team

Chris Ellison, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Yvonne Garvey	Ofsted Inspector
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Neil Strowger	Ofsted Inspector
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