

Inspection of School of Science and Technology Maidstone

New Cut Road, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5GQ

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 January 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this school. Leaders have exceptionally high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Leaders put in place carefully planned adaptations and interventions to make sure that pupils can meet those expectations. Pupils follow a very ambitious curriculum. This, alongside the high-quality teaching they receive, means that they are very knowledgeable. Pupils discuss what they have learned with confidence.

Pupils are thoughtful and respectful towards each other and towards members of staff. Pupils appreciate the way that staff take care to listen to them and act on their ideas and views. This culture of respect helps pupils to feel safe. Bullying is very rare, and pupils are confident that if it does occur, it will be dealt with quickly by staff.

Teachers have set up a wide range of clubs at the school and almost all pupils take part in these wider opportunities. Leaders have made sure that there is something for everyone. Many of these clubs were suggested by the pupils themselves. Pupils are also encouraged by teachers to innovate. This has included pupils creating their own computer applications which are now used in the school.

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

This school opened in 2020 and currently has pupils aged 11 to 14. Leaders have already created a highly ambitious curriculum which goes beyond the national curriculum. For example, pupils are not only taught a modern foreign language but are also taught about linguistics to help prepare them for future study. The school was set up to focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and these subjects run through the school. However, leaders have ensured that the curriculum remains broad with a further focus on the arts and reading. A rich culture of reading permeates the school. Staff support pupils to develop their confidence in reading and to have a passion for both reading and writing. When pupils need additional support with reading, this support is timely and highly effective.

Teachers use a range of well-planned assessments to identify how well pupils are learning. When teachers identify gaps in pupils' knowledge they put in place opportunities for them to catch up, including providing support in class that is effective and well considered. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported by leaders. Leaders work with teachers to carefully identify any barriers to learning or to taking part in the full life of the school. Staff then ensure that all pupils have the help they need to overcome these obstacles. Leaders have made subtle and thoughtful adaptations to the school to make sure that physical disabilities do not prevent pupils from either achieving highly or from being included in activities with their peers.

Leaders ensure that pupil behaviour does not disrupt learning. Sanctions are used appropriately but are rarely needed as the behaviour of pupils is usually impeccable.

Pupils are taught why it is important to behave appropriately. They talk thoughtfully about the importance of having integrity. This moral education is part of a curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education that leaders have planned out exceptionally well. Teachers ensure that this curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of all pupils in their classes. Leaders have also created a comprehensive programme for relationships and sex education and health education which gives pupils the information they need in an age-appropriate way. Pupils also receive an excellent package of careers education which leaders have woven into their lessons carefully, as well as through termly 'empower days'.

The school is exceptionally well led. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have a very clear vision for the school which is based on high expectations. They also have the knowledge and the skills to make that vision a reality for the pupils here. Leaders respond quickly to any concerns raised by pupils, parents and staff, and this wider community is highly supportive of the school. Staff feel very well supported. Leaders have acted to make sure that everyone has the time to focus on the actions that will benefit pupils the most.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained by leaders in how to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders take effective actions to ensure that this training makes a difference. When concerns are raised, leaders are quick to act. They are resolute in ensuring that pupils get the appropriate help that they need. The systems used by staff to keep pupils safe are rigorous.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. This includes how to keep safe online and how to have healthy relationships. Teachers follow a well-thought-out curriculum that responds well to the needs of the pupils.

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.

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	144716
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256268
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	577
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nick Ware
Headteacher	Van Beales
Website	www.sstmaidstone.viat.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- School of Science and Technology Maidstone was opened in 2020. It currently has pupils from ages 11 to 14.
- This school is part of the Valley Invicta Academies Trust.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 headteacher and other members of the leadership team, including the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with trustees, members of the local governing body and representatives of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: art, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. 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 evaluated the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements in the school by speaking with leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to examine their knowledge and their practices. During these meetings, the lead inspector scrutinised records and sampled case files to explore how the school identifies and supports pupils at risk of harm. A team inspector examined the school's work to recruit and check on the suitability of staff.
- The views of parents were taken into account by considering the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the accompanying comments.
- The views of staff were considered by talking to a wide range of people, including early careers teachers, and through an online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally, in groups and around the school. They also met with representatives of the student leadership team

Inspection team

Mark Enser, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Harry Kutty

Ofsted Inspector

Sue Bzikot

Ofsted Inspector

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