

Inspection of Fulston Manor School

Brenchley Road, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 4EG

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

The executive headteacher of this school is Susie Burden. This school is part of the Fulston Manor Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, who is also the executive headteacher, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Louise O'Sullivan.

What is it like to attend this school?

Fulston Manor is a kind school committed to providing a safe, welcoming and friendly place to learn. Pupils are happy and safe. Leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. Nevertheless, low-level disruption occasionally interrupts pupils' learning in key stage 3.

Staff want pupils to achieve well, recognising education as the gateway to a successful and aspirational future. However, pupils do not currently learn as well as they should, because the curriculum is not taught consistently well.

Relationships are strong and supportive. The culture of celebration, reward and pride is evident. Pupils feel they are part of the Fulston family. They are proud of their school but also candid about areas that need to improve.

The personal development curriculum prepares pupils well for adult life. The school ensures that pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of consent and a sense of their own identity, enabling them to take their place in the community.

The programme of extra-curricular opportunities is rich, well considered and valued. Activities are carefully planned, and attendance is tracked. Participation is high, especially among disadvantaged pupils. Careers education reinforces the value of education and encourages large numbers of pupils to continue their schooling beyond the age of 16.

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

The school offers a broad range of subjects, which exceed the requirements of the national curriculum. The proportion of pupils entered for the English Baccalaureate suite of qualifications is increasing and staff are working hard to develop pupils' enthusiasm and love for languages. The sixth-form curriculum offer is extensive and bespoke.

Across the school, in most subjects thought has been given to what pupils should learn and when. Teachers are well equipped to deliver the curriculum and have secure subject knowledge. Opportunities to recall prior learning are built into most lessons. However, not enough attention is given to ensuring that pupils learn broadly and deeply across the subjects that they study. The focus of the curriculum is too often linked to preparing pupils for GCSE examinations, rather than prioritising the knowledge needed to become life-long learners of the subject. Checks on learning during lessons do not routinely help teachers to adapt future teaching so that knowledge is built on and gaps are addressed. Consequently, pupils do not develop secure enough knowledge of the subjects that they study.

Disadvantaged pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are known, but the support they receive is variable. Staff are not always clear about how to help these pupils or how to check that any extra support is

making a difference. Consequently, not all disadvantaged pupils catch up with their peers quickly enough.

Work to support weaker readers is ongoing and evolving. Those who need it receive useful extra help with learning phonics. Others in key stage 3 are supported well to become more fluent readers, including through use of the library. Leaders have plans to further develop reading support into key stage 4 for those who need it.

Relationships are positive and kind. Instances of bullying, racism and sexually inappropriate behaviour are very rare. Reflection and restorative conversations are helping to reduce the number of pupils being removed from lessons. Leaders' actions are leading to improvements in attendance, particularly for persistent absentees. There is further work to do but leaders remain vigilant and determined.

Staff are well motivated and work cooperatively to support each other's workload. They say that leaders support their well-being through providing opportunities for departments to collaborate over their curricular planning. Continuing professional development and ongoing coaching are having a positive impact on staff's subject and leadership expertise.

The sixth form is highly regarded and is a popular destination for pupils from other neighbouring schools. The school offers a breadth of subjects alongside high-quality careers information, education, advice and guidance that start lower down the school. Students' work is of a very high standard. Year 13 students have developed high levels of independence, understanding and knowledge retention. Drop-out rates are low, and students are studying full programmes. This prepares them very well for the future, reflected in their applications to Oxbridge and uptake of high-quality apprenticeship options. Attendance is high and attitudes are positive. Pastoral support is particularly strong.

Governors and trustees are confident about their roles and responsibilities. There is a clear demarcation between the roles of trustees and the roles of governors. Governors and trustees have a clear understanding of how the school operates as a result of subject reviews and classroom visits. They have received extensive training to support their work. Leaders are held to account for the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum does not consistently identify what pupils need to learn so that they develop a deep and effective body of knowledge across the curriculum. Learning sometimes leans too heavily on preparing for examinations instead of preparation for future learning, impeding the depth of pupils' understanding. The

school should ensure that curriculum planning routinely focuses on the vital knowledge that pupils need to be successful learners of their subjects.

- Learning is not always matched precisely enough to pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils do not develop a deep and secure body of knowledge across the curriculum. The school should ensure that 'in the moment assessment' and the matching and adaptation of subsequent teaching enable pupils to build their knowledge securely and consistently over time.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136324
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256416
Type of school	Secondary (non-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	1,340
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	278
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Louise O'Sullivan
CEO of the trust	Susie Burden
Headteacher	Susie Burden (Executive headteacher)
Website	www.fulstonmanor.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 December 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Fulston Manor School is an above-average-sized 11 to 18 mixed school with an above-average-sized sixth form. The school is non-selective in an area with selective education. The school is part of the Fulston Manor Academies Trust.
- Seven pupils attend alternative provision at two registered education providers and one unregistered education provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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 conducted deep dives in English, mathematics, geography, art, modern foreign languages, and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, talked with teachers, spoke to pupils and students and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, staff, students and pupils. They spoke to a group of early career teachers and their mentors about training and support.
- Inspectors looked at school policies, curriculum documentation, behaviour logs, attendance records and destination statistics. They spoke with representatives of the alternative provision schools. The lead inspector met with trust leaders, trustees and governors.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire and additional written comments from parents. They reviewed the survey returns completed by staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Baker	Ofsted Inspector
Nicky Archer	Ofsted Inspector
Tash Hurtado	Ofsted Inspector
Kathryn Moles	His Majesty's Inspector

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