

# Inspection of The Maplesden Noakes School

Buckland Road, Maidstone, Kent ME16 0TJ

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Inspection dates: 1 and 2 May 2024

**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**

Previous inspection grade Good

The headteacher of this school is Richard Owen. This school is part of The Maplesden Noakes School Trust. The school is overseen by a board of governors, chaired by Tony Hedges.

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

Pupils at this inclusive school are friendly and polite. They feel happy and safe. Staff and pupils talk warmly about belonging to the 'Maplesden family'. The school's values of kindness, empathy and respect underpin all that the school does.

The school has high expectations for what pupils, and students in the sixth form, can achieve. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils keenly develop their skills and knowledge through an ambitious curriculum that reflects those expectations.

There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. Staff care about their pupils' education and well-being. Clear, consistent routines ensure that pupils behave well and focus on their learning within a calm and purposeful environment. They behave well at social times, including in the dining areas. The school does not tolerate bullying. Most pupils feel confident that any unkind behaviour will be dealt with.

Pupils benefit from attending a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. These include sports clubs, arts clubs and some more specialised ones such as criminology and Raspberry Pi clubs. Trips, both locally and abroad, are growing in number. Pupils act as sports leaders to organise events with local primary school children. Sixth-form students speak enthusiastically about participation in the 'Business Challenge', where they gain a valuable insight into the world of work.

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

Leaders and governors are driven by a strong sense of moral purpose. They think carefully about how to give pupils the best opportunities for the future. Staff are loyal and committed. Teaching and support staff, including those in the early stages of their careers, are proud to work at the school. They particularly value leaders' careful consideration of their workload and well-being so that they can focus their efforts fully on pupils' education.

The curriculum in key stage 3 has been strengthened to provide a strong foundation for further study. Pupils have a wide choice of subjects to study in key stage 4. The number of pupils taking a foreign language is growing, so more pupils now have the opportunity to achieve the English Baccalaureate. Sixth-form students, many of whom join from far afield, appreciate the exciting range of academic and vocational courses.

Although published examination results in 2023 were not strong overall, changes made to the curriculum, together with a strong focus on professional training, mean that current pupils are achieving well. The school has identified the important knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. It has ensured that the curriculum is progressive so that pupils build on what they know. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They design activities that help pupils to know more and

remember more. They test pupils' understanding through careful questioning. However, sometimes work is not matched closely enough to pupils' needs and some teachers do not always make the necessary adjustments to ensure that pupils can learn as much as they could.

The school accurately identifies the needs of pupils with SEND. Staff know these pupils well as individuals. As a result, pupils with SEND receive the right extra help and most make good progress through the curriculum. This includes pupils at an early stage of reading, who get the help they need to become confident and fluent readers. All pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure. There is much excitement about the new library, which pupils have helped to design.

Most pupils, including students in the sixth form, attend school regularly. The school works hard to support those who find coming to school more difficult. There is clear evidence that this support is helping more pupils to attend regularly. Staff strive to create a positive, inclusive climate that pupils want to be part of. Pastoral support is strong. Parents and pupils appreciate the help given from the student support managers.

The personal development of pupils is strong. The school has designed a carefully considered programme from Year 7 to 13 that teaches pupils how to stay safe and look after their health and well-being. It is taught by specialist staff and supplemented with activities in tutor time. The programme is readily adapted to deal with current issues that may arise. Pupils explore diversity and are proud that their school is very accepting of difference. High-quality careers advice and guidance prepares pupils well for their next steps. For example, many pupils benefit from visits to local universities to raise their aspirations. Most sixth-form students gain places at their chosen university or on apprenticeship courses. As one parent said: 'There is a positive and inclusive culture, applied values and, most importantly, a focus on developing the whole pupil.'

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Not all pupils achieve as well as they could. At times, the activities and work set in lessons do not help some pupils effectively to learn the identified key knowledge and skills. The school should continue to ensure that staff have the appropriate knowledge and expertise to help pupils understand and remember more to reach the school's ambitious goals.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137833
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10321946
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Modern (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<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>	1,408
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	287
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Tony Hedges (Acting)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Richard Owen
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.maplesden.kent.sch.uk">www.maplesden.kent.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 November 2018

## Information about this school

- Leaders make use of two registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- 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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, pupils, the vice-chair of governors and one other governor. An inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- An inspector held a telephone discussion with a member of staff at two alternative providers.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, 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 some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including early career teachers, about behaviour and their workload in school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey. They took account of the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments and feedback. Inspectors considered the views of pupils shared in the confidential pupil survey and through discussions held with pupils throughout the school.

### **Inspection team**

Paula Sargent, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lorraine Clarke	Ofsted Inspector
Ben Bond	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Brinkley	His Majesty's Inspector
Simon Potten	Ofsted Inspector

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