

Inspection of Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys

Langton Lane, Nackington Road, Canterbury, Kent CT4 7AS

Inspection dates:	26 and 27 November 2024
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged to be outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since November 2013. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, receive an outstanding education at 'The Langton'. Several pupils praised how adults 'work with us' to ensure that pupils develop a deep knowledge across the curriculum. Pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve extremely highly.

Behaviour is excellent. Pupils know that adults want them to be successful and happy in life. There are warm positive relationships between pupils and staff, and between pupils themselves. Girls who join in the sixth form quickly settle in. Adults make sure that vulnerable pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are fully included in the life of the school. A wide range of trips and visits augment pupils' academic education. Several clubs and societies, often started by pupils themselves, ensure that pupils can follow their talents and interests. Pupils are rightly proud of their own achievements, but most impressively pupils delight in the successes of others too.

While many parents and carers praised how well the school communicates with them, some reported more negative experiences. Overall, however, the vast majority are full of praise for the school and how it helps pupils to grow into extremely well-rounded young adults. This includes several parents whose children attend the school's specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND ('specially resourced provision') who have a diagnosis of autism.

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

The quality of education pupils receive at the school is exceptional. The curriculum is designed so that teachers enrich learning by utilising their extensive expertise and 'teach to our passions', as many teachers reported. This ensures that pupils develop a love of learning and achieve excellent outcomes.

Teachers are experts in the subjects that they teach. They are adept at checking what pupils know and understand. Teachers carefully reshape learning to help any pupils who might be in danger of falling behind or who need adaptations because of any SEND. This ensures that pupils quickly understand complex concepts in great depth. Extra help for pupils who need it, including for those who speak English as an additional language, is well thought out and highly effective.

Pupils are encouraged to think deeply, embrace challenge and solve problems. They become experts in a wide range of academic, creative and artistic subjects. In addition, pupils participate in high-quality academic research projects aimed at solving real-world problems. For example, students in the sixth form spoke powerfully about a project involving gene manipulation and another, which is researching materials that might help treat melanoma. During the inspection, pupils who study design technology were very successful in an international competition to design and build a racing car.

The school has increased its focus on pupils' personal development in recent years so that it is now excellent. Several parents praised the pastoral staff for how well they look out for pupils, particularly when pupils first join the school in Year 7 or Year 12. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, spoke positively about how well supported they are to develop good learning habits, healthy relationships and to understand how to look after their mental and physical well-being. Pupils welcome the numerous opportunities to promote equalities and tackle discrimination in the wider world, be that through the feminist society, race equality group or by giving 'expert by experience' assemblies about autism. Many pupils sing regularly with a group of people in the local community who have Parkinson's disease. Several pupils and parents praised the school for its inclusive approach to sport.

There is a well-organised programme of careers education, advice and guidance. Pupils appreciate talks from professionals from a wide range of careers. The quality of the education they receive, in its broadest sense, helps pupils to achieve and sustain destinations at top universities and degree-level apprenticeships.

Attendance is high and behaviour is very strong. The school supports individuals who struggle to attend regularly. Similarly, where pupils need extra support to maintain positive behaviour, the school provides timely help and advice. The school has started to monitor and evaluate overall attendance and behaviour more effectively. This is helping leaders to identify where there are minor weaknesses that they can learn from if they arise.

Staff feel a strong attachment to the school. They are well supported in managing their workload. Those new to teaching are understandably extremely happy with the support and high-quality mentoring they receive.

In the last couple of years, the governing body and senior leaders have recognised that some aspects of leadership and management could be sharpened. New monitoring and recording systems are starting to provide leaders with much better information about pupils' achievements, well-being, behaviour and attitudes. Leaders have accessed additional training in what to do with this information, including from the local authority and a local multi-academy trust. As a result, the school is much better than it has been in the past at providing the precise help and support that pupils need. Governors rightly continue to identify where the school's policies and practice need further sharpening.

Several hundred parents responded to Ofsted's confidential survey, Parent View, with strongly positive views about the school. However, some parents commented that the way the school communicates with stakeholders can be confusing or appear defensive or dismissive. Leaders and governors have reflected well on this, including by creating a new complaints policy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors have sharpened their work to keep children safe in recent years. However, minor improvements are needed. In particular, the school has recognised that some safeguarding records do not identify issues clearly enough. Occasionally, staff are unsure whether to categorise a concern they have as a behaviour or safeguarding issue. This makes it harder for the school to analyse and act on any emerging patterns or trends. The school is becoming more reflective about safeguarding issues. However, this is not always articulated well to parents and other stakeholders.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, communications from the school are not well considered and the school occasionally comes across as not being receptive or reflective enough when facing challenge. This can lead to parents being unsure about how well their child is doing and can concern some parents. The school needs to ensure that it shares relevant information with parents in a timely, constructive and clear way, including when dealing with formal complaints.
- The school is improving its oversight and monitoring of how well its policies work in practice. This is providing leaders with more information than in the past around attendance, behaviour and safeguarding. The school should ensure that the information it now has available is used to identify any trends and patterns, and apply this learning to further improve aspects of the school, including in safeguarding.

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	118884
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10341527
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1227
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	443
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Doug Agnew
Headteacher	Ken Moffat
Website	www.thelangton.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 November 2013

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in post since January 2020. Prior to that, he was head of school.
- The deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2024.
- The designated safeguarding lead took up the role in September 2023.
- There has been a significant change in governors since 2022. The current chair was appointed in November 2023.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for 35 pupils with autism. The school currently has 41 pupils registered as part of the provision. Pupils use the provision as a therapeutic space. Most of their time is spent in lessons in the main school and sixth form.

- The school works collaboratively with Canterbury Academy.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Year 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the chair of the governing body and other governors to discuss the leadership and provision in the school. The lead inspector also held a telephone call with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, art, languages, geography and business and economics. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered the effectiveness of the school's curriculum by exploring the school's approach to supporting pupils who need additional help and adaptations to keep up and catch up. This included discussing the school's approach to the professional development of staff and considering how well pupils with SEND and pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported to achieve.
- Inspectors considered how well the school supports the learning and therapeutic needs of pupils who attend the school as part of the special resource provision.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff, pupils and the local authority designated offer and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of the school's documentation and met with groups of pupils and staff to discuss their experiences and views of the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.

- The responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments, were considered, as were responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tom Neave

Ofsted Inspector

Tash Hurtado

Ofsted Inspector

Jon Wood

Ofsted Inspector

Wendy Martin

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024