

Inspection of MEPA ACADEMY

27 & 29 Earl Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1PF

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 September 2025

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to attend this inclusive and welcoming school. Parents and carers share this enthusiasm for what the school offers to its pupils. They describe the way that their children 'thrive' at the school, valuing the 'safe and supportive' environment and the 'amazing' array of opportunities.

Pupils work hard and are committed to their studies. They behave exceptionally well, treating one another with high levels of respect and kindness. Warm and supportive relationships are consistently enacted between adults and pupils.

Leaders and staff know pupils well. They are ambitious for what pupils can achieve. Pupils readily rise to meet these high expectations, both academically and within the performing arts specialist areas that they learn in abundance. As a result, they achieve well.

Pupils benefit from an extensive range of opportunities beyond their already ambitious curriculum offer. Many, including the most vulnerable, stay after school to attend the large array of classes to further develop their talents and interests in the performing arts. These include a variety of classes in dance, acro and theatre.

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

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum offer. Pupils benefit from a strong balance between their academic and vocational studies. Carefully considered plans identify the knowledge and skills that pupils need to develop. Many pupils join this school at different points through their school careers. Staff identify pupils' starting points well to support them to fill any gaps in learning that might exist. Pupils' needs are identified quickly, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Information is shared with staff so that they can make the adaptations necessary to support pupils with SEND in their learning. While these are mostly effective, there are times when these adaptations could be more precise to support pupils in being able to access their work more readily.

Staff have strong subject expertise and are well qualified to deliver the curriculum. In addition to employed staff, pupils also benefit from guest teachers from industry who offer their wider expertise. Explanations in most lessons are clear, and pupils feel confident to ask questions.

In some lessons, staff pick up on pupil misconceptions quickly. For example, they use adept questioning to identify where misconceptions exist, and remedy them in the moment. In the strongest lessons, staff identify the areas in pupils' work that need further refinement and set appropriate next steps for pupils. However, these checks and the actions that come from these are not as consistently sharp as they could be. This means that sometimes pupils' misconceptions persist, or pupils do not develop their understanding as well as they might.

The school works effectively to support pupils to attend well. This work impacts positively on attendance. For some pupils, their barriers to high attendance are more significant. Staff take considered steps to ensure that these pupils and their families are supported to attend school more frequently.

In addition to the broad extra-curricular offer, the school offers a range of enrichment activities across the school year to further support pupils' wider development. For example, pupils raise money for local charities and collect donations for a local food bank. Pupils develop their confidence and resilience through competitions and opportunities to perform, both locally and against international competitors. Pupils further benefit from opportunities to learn about a range of careers, both within the performing arts sphere from specialist staff, as well as beyond. Leaders continually review and widen this offer to meet pupils' needs and interests.

Leaders are reflective and consistently seek to make the offer to their pupils stronger still. The proprietor, who is also the principal of the school, has developed effective professional networks, which they use appropriately to measure the impact of their work and assure themselves it is effective. The proprietor ensures that all the independent school standards (the standards) are met, including ensuring that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Assessment in some areas of the school is not as sharp as it could be. As a result, at times, the school does not identify pupils' misconceptions or routinely use this information to inform the next steps of teaching as responsively as it could. The school should ensure that a more systematic approach to assessment is consistently embedded across the school so that pupils' misconceptions are identified, staff make precise adaptations to teaching and pupils have a clear understanding of their next steps to support them to achieve well across the curriculum.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	148632
DfE registration number	886/6164
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10391811
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mandy Ellen
Headteacher	Mandy Ellen (Principal) Lewis Muir (Head of School)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£16,200
Telephone number	01622 756644
Website	www.mepaacademy.com/
Email address	info@mepaacademy.com
Dates of previous inspection	27 to 29 September 2022

Information about this school

- The school operates across two separate sites: the main school site based at 27 and 29 Earl Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1PF, and 'Studio 6' is another building used at times as a performance space located at ME16 8PP.
- MEPA Academy is a performing arts school that caters for pupils from ages 11 to 16. Studio 6 is also used by MEPA College. This is a separately registered provision that provides post-16 education. It is inspected separately and has not been considered as part of this inspection.
- The school has a sole proprietor, who is also the principal. In addition, the school leadership team comprises a vice principal and a head of school. The head of school has joined the school since the last inspection. The school also works with external consultants as needed.
- The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team held meetings with the principal and other senior leaders, teachers and pupils.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and performing arts. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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.
- The inspection team took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and records of any external quality assurance visits.

- Inspectors toured the school site to gather evidence about compliance with the standards. Inspectors also reviewed a range of other documents and policies, including on the school’s website.
- The team spoke with pupils about their experience of the school. They also took account of parent and staff views through conversations and responses to Ofsted’s surveys.

Inspection team

Marian Feeley, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Simon Graydon

His Majesty’s Inspector

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