

# Fulston Manor School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118886
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	313134
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patricia Metham HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Modern (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1167
6th form	221
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rita Couzins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alan Brookes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 September 2003
<b>School address</b>	Brenchley Road Sittingbourne ME10 4EG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01795 475228
<b>Fax number</b>	01795 428144

---

<b>Age group</b>	11-18
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 March 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	313134

---

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Fulston Manor is a larger than average school, with a relatively small proportion of students eligible for free school meals. Most students are of White British heritage; very few have English as an acquired language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average; most relate to behavioural, social and emotional issues or language and communication skills. The school gained specialist status for business and enterprise in September 2005. It has partnerships with two local grammar schools and two local non-selective schools.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The overall quality of education provided by this non-selective school is outstanding, demonstrated by the progress made by its students both academically and in their personal development. Its sixth form is good. The senior leadership most effectively combines long commitment to the school with an energetic readiness to seize and exploit opportunities, especially those stemming from its specialist status for business and enterprise. Decision making grows from a secure understanding of the local area and of the role Fulston Manor can best play within its educational network. Overall capacity to improve is outstanding. The headteacher has the clear backing of governors for his strategic vision and for the policies he and his team are enthusiastically implementing. A growing reputation for breadth of achievement has led to the school being oversubscribed. One parent spoke for many: 'We feel that Fulston Manor brings out the best of pupils in all aspects and works hard to educate them in a holistic way.'

Levels of attainment on entry to Year 7 are lower than average, reflecting the impact of nearby grammar schools. Students then make excellent progress across Years 7 to 11, with standards at GCSE or equivalent broadly in line with national figures. All groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make similar rates of progress. Achievement in the sixth form, while not maintaining this momentum, is good overall.

Students' progress is driven by exemplary care, guidance and support and by their own focus on achievement. Most teaching is good or better, combining confident subject knowledge with a persuasive commitment to students' personal and academic development. Demanding targets set by management at all levels ensure that students' progress is carefully tracked and intervention is prompt to tackle any underperformance or loss of motivation. Students understand their personal targets well and appreciate marking of written work that clearly sets out what they should do to improve. Additional funding for specialist status has led to a major upgrading of information and communication technology (ICT) and further boosted students' learning. The higher profile now given to innovation and enterprise in planning and teaching is steadily disseminating and embedding good practice across departments. Some unevenness remains. However, students' willingness to do whatever will move them forward keeps them engaged and learning even if lessons lack pace or variety. They are cooperative rather than independent learners. This style of learning works well for them until the sixth form, when a more independent approach is called for.

Recent years have seen highly effective curriculum development and this is a major factor explaining the outstanding outcomes for the students. The range of work-related options in Years 10 and 11 has expanded, matching the abilities and aspirations of those students not well served by a more traditional curriculum. Challenging targets linked to the school's specialist status have been met and new, more demanding, targets now set. The school has created its own framework to assess 'enterprise', giving Year 12 students a portfolio they can draw on to support future applications, which has enhanced students' confidence and sense of purpose. Recognising that students have tended to be over-dependent, the school is developing a project-based approach in Year 7 to encourage independent study skills and enquiry. It is too early to assess the impact of this initiative on students' long-term development as independent learners. Partnerships with two local grammar schools have very successfully enhanced sixth form options. An outstanding programme of activities extends and enriches the main curriculum.

Students are extremely well informed about the importance of a healthy lifestyle and value the range of sports and activities offered. They treat each other and adults with great care and consideration and respond with outstanding good sense and commitment to opportunities to take on responsibility. The school is a strongly cohesive community where students feel extremely safe and take pride in their own and others' achievements. They show a very thoughtful awareness of moral, spiritual and cultural issues. Confident skills in English, mathematics and ICT, complemented by careers guidance and a breadth of work-related learning, prepare students exceptionally well for life beyond school.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

Fulston Manor has a good, well led sixth form. The school's inclusive approach means that entry requirements are significantly less demanding than in many sixth forms and the range of ability and experience is wider. Students make good progress to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 13, although many find the step up from GCSE to AS level difficult. Systematic tracking of progress identifies underachievement rapidly and effective support follows. Year 12 students require and are given considerable guidance to mature into independent learners. Teaching is good overall, although with some unevenness between subjects and teachers. There is no over-arching monitoring system for securing the quality of sixth-form teaching. Good retention rates on courses and attendance at lessons indicate that students enjoy their learning and recognise what success means for their future. This is underpinned by discerning and up-to-date careers guidance.

Partnerships with two local grammar schools and other post-16 providers add depth and flexibility to a good curriculum but many students lack the confidence to exploit this fully. The timetabled enrichment programme is limited and does not draw enough students into physical exercise. However, many enjoy the wide range of after-school clubs, often initiating successful artistic, sporting and charitable events. Students are courteous and well intentioned; their personal development is good.

The sixth form is growing in popularity; students from other institutions are attracted particularly by the quality of courses in the arts, ICT and business. The proportion going on to study at university substantially increased between 2006 and 2007.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that good practice in teaching is disseminated and embedded consistently and securely across all departments.
- Develop students as independent learners to enhance the quality of their learning and ease transition to the sixth form.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Achievement is outstanding across Years 7 to 11. Students have substantially exceeded the school's statutory targets for English, mathematics and science in the tests taken at the end of Year 9, although overall levels of attainment remain below the national average at this stage. By the end of Year 11, students' levels of attainment are in line with national averages, an excellent achievement given their starting points. The percentage gaining five or more GCSEs

at A\*- C including English and mathematics matched the national average in 2007, with slightly more students gaining a grade C or higher in mathematics than the national figure. Results in geography, ICT, design and technology, and religious education were particularly good.

Well focused analysis of data underpins the process of setting targets and the tracking of students' progress. There is evidence that setting by ability in core subjects has raised overall standards, with students feeling secure and able to fulfil their potential.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students thrive in an environment that promotes an outstanding quality of personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Despite concerns expressed by a small number of parents, behaviour observed in lessons and around the school was excellent. There is a well established culture of mutual respect and support, with adults and senior students acting as strong role models. Students greatly enjoy being at school, attend regularly and are keen to do well; one commented, 'It's a relaxed, friendly environment to work in.' Students feel exceptionally safe, confident that any problems will be dealt with promptly and effectively by tutors or by peer mentors and prefects. All year groups understand extremely well the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Food in the school canteen and in most students' lunch boxes is healthy and the excellent range of extra-curricular sports and activities is very popular. Students respond with outstanding sense and enthusiasm to opportunities to take responsibility; 'buddy' and peer mentoring systems are valued and well supported. Students also support links with primary schools and the wider community developed through the school's business and enterprise specialism. Work experience and work-related learning and secure literacy, numeracy and ICT skills give students an excellent foundation for future economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The overall quality of teaching is good and supports the excellent progress made by these receptive and highly amenable students. After a period of some instability, staffing is now more secure, allowing the school's ambitious and well targeted programme of continuing professional development to have an increasingly positive impact. Whole-staff training sessions focus on key issues such as how assessment and reporting can enhance learning. There is effective modelling of best practice by advanced skills teachers and targeted support for individuals.

The school's best teaching is characterised by lively pace, a variety of approach to match varied learning styles, the confidence to allow students scope for interactive learning, clarity of purpose and an infectious enthusiasm for the subject. Occasionally, however, lessons are teacher-dominated, concentrating on instruction and the completion of tasks. While this approach gives students valuable information to steer them successfully towards a range of qualifications, it does not aid their development as independent learners.

Updated resources and a fresh perspective on teaching and learning have come with specialist status, leading to a more creative use of ICT in most departments and exploration of the

'enterprise' potential of each subject in ways well suited to students' abilities and aspirations. The proportion of excellent teaching is expanding, with English, mathematics, business and ICT playing a key role in support of other departments.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The excellent curriculum and enrichment activities are a real strength of the school and underpin the students' outstanding progress in their academic and personal development. Specialist status has had a wide-reaching impact; for example, personal finance qualifications have been introduced and a broader range of vocational alternatives is available for students aged 14-19. There has been greater collaboration between subjects through joint curriculum projects and links with the wider community have blossomed. Such partnerships have given flexibility and choice to students in their studies; for example, collaboration with local schools has enabled vocational courses and additional A-level options to be pursued in other centres.

Students appreciate the school's readiness to adapt the curriculum to meet individual ambitions and interests. The introduction of BTEC construction and engineering and of psychology and law, for example, was at the request of parents and students. The opportunity for more able students to enter GCSEs early in mathematics has kept them engaged and enthusiastic about their learning. Out-of-classroom activities, such as participation in the Royal Bank of Scotland Financial Challenge, spur enjoyment and encourage initiative. Focus days, dedicating extended time to a particular curriculum area, are very successfully providing opportunities for in-depth study, project work and intensive revision.

An extensive range of extra-curricular activities, field trips and residential visits, which complements the main curriculum, are enjoyed by students of all abilities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Care, guidance and support for students are outstanding and a key factor in their excellent progress. There is a well managed house and tutor system, with mixed-age tutor groups ensuring that the school remains a cohesive and mutually supportive community. Pastoral care and academic guidance are interlinked. All teachers have access to assessment and tracking data and parents can find important information about their child's progress at any time through a web-based portal. There is a great emphasis on consultation and collaboration in all decisions relating to students' current and future options. Careers guidance, including work placements, is systematic, resourced well, and developed across all year groups. Marking of written work and feedback in lessons very effectively support learning. Students say that their teachers 'treat everyone as an individual and an equal' which is why 'they get more out of us'.

There are excellent systems to support vulnerable students and those at risk of exclusion. The school welfare officer and school nurse, working closely with external agencies, respond to students' needs promptly and expertly. The security of students is a priority; very thorough child protection systems are in place.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The head and senior team share an exceptionally clear, confident strategic vision which permeates the school and shapes departmental planning. Subject leaders analyse results systematically, correctly identify areas for improvement and put monitored interventions in place that are successfully addressing less effective aspects of teaching. Strengths are identified for dissemination across the curriculum, encouraging the sharing of good practice and reinforcing the school's culture of reflection and continuing development. Senior leaders know their school exceptionally well and set challenging targets that raise standards and accelerate progress. They are taking decisive action to tackle unevenness in the quality of teaching and to exploit talent and ambition amongst the staff, creating opportunities for all to make a serious contribution to whole-school planning and development. Effective steps have been taken to implement recommendations made at the last inspection.

Specialist status is being managed with considerable verve, flexibility and commitment. Linked funding has been imaginatively used in capital projects such as the Business Centre to raise the profile of the school, to support its work with the community and to encourage innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Secure systems are in place to ensure that departmental budgets are well linked to the school plan and that expenditure is closely but supportively monitored to achieve good value for money. The full impact of investment in professional development has yet to be seen. Although governors find it difficult to spend time routinely in the school, the governing body combines a very useful range of relevant expertise and ensures that the school is properly held to account.



**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
---	----------------	-------

### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

31 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Fulston Manor School, Sittingbourne, ME10 4EG

Thank you for the cheerful courtesy and helpfulness you showed when we visited your school recently to see how well it is doing. We all greatly appreciated the openness with which you answered our questions and showed us your work, and we were impressed by the evident pride you take in your school and in your own achievements.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to let you know what your school does particularly well and how it could do even better. Yours is an outstanding school with a good sixth form. We agree with you that amongst its greatest strengths are the care and guidance you are given by your tutors and teachers and the support you give each other. It is clear that you are keen to do well and respond very positively to the opportunities you have to fulfil your personal potential. You make excellent progress and achieve results that do you credit. The school provides you with an exceptionally well balanced and flexible curriculum and an impressive range of clubs and activities. Specialist status for business and enterprise has had a tremendously positive impact on all aspects of your school, as you will have noticed, in providing modern technology, supporting the development of new subjects, encouraging a more enterprising approach to lesson planning and increasing opportunities for you to interact with the local community.

We have suggested that those responsible for monitoring and improving the impact of teaching on your learning should ensure that all lessons are as effective as the best and that you are encouraged to develop more independent study skills and to take more responsibility for your own learning.

I wish you and your school continuing success.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham Her Majesty's Inspector

31 March 2008

Dear Students

**Inspection of Fulston Manor School, Sittingbourne, ME10 4EG**

Thank you for the cheerful courtesy and helpfulness you showed when we visited your school recently to see how well it is doing. We all greatly appreciated the openness with which you answered our questions and showed us your work, and we were impressed by the evident pride you take in your school and in your own achievements.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to let you know what your school does particularly well and how it could do even better. Yours is an outstanding school with a good sixth form. We agree with you that amongst its greatest strengths are the care and guidance you are given by your tutors and teachers and the support you give each other. It is clear that you are keen to do well and respond very positively to the opportunities you have to fulfil your personal potential. You make excellent progress and achieve results that do you credit. The school provides you with an exceptionally well balanced and flexible curriculum and an impressive range of clubs and activities. Specialist status for business and enterprise has had a tremendously positive impact on all aspects of your school, as you will have noticed, in providing modern technology, supporting the development of new subjects, encouraging a more enterprising approach to lesson planning and increasing opportunities for you to interact with the local community.

We have suggested that those responsible for monitoring and improving the impact of teaching on your learning should ensure that all lessons are as effective as the best and that you are encouraged to develop more independent study skills and to take more responsibility for your own learning.

I wish you and your school continuing success.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham  
Her Majesty's Inspector