

# The Maplesden Noakes School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118873
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	339315
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 June 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patricia Metham

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

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<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
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1048
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	150
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs L Jalili-Hodges
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J Prideaux
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Buckland Road Maidstone ME16 0TJ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 35 lessons, saw 34 teachers and held meetings with governors, staff and students. They observed the school's work and looked at data on students' attainment over the past three years, at schemes of work, policies, the school improvement plan and reports from advisers working with the school. They considered 80 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers, and 179 responses to the students' questionnaire.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- attainment and progress in Key Stage 4, with particular attention to English and mathematics
- outcomes for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- attainment and progress in the sixth form
- the impact of the school's business and enterprise specialism on the curriculum and on outcomes for students.

## Information about the school

- The Maplesden Noakes School accepts students who have either not passed or have elected not to take the Kent selection tests in Year 6.
- The proportion of students from ethnic minority groups is relatively low and few are at an early stage of English language acquisition.
- There is a higher than average proportion of students with statements of special educational needs.
- The curriculum in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is provided in collaboration with local schools and colleges.
- In 2007, the school achieved extended school status.
- school was awarded specialist status for business and education in 2004 and was recognised as a high performing specialist school in 2008.
- In 2010, the school gained specialist status for applied learning.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school, described by a student as 'a happy environment'. An ambitious vision for the school's development as a hub for business and enterprise education is persuasively presented by the governing body and senior leaders. The school's specialisms are making a significant contribution to curriculum development, students' outcomes and to the school's standing and participation in the local community. Well-grounded assessment of the school's strengths and areas for development, and the positive impact of recent strategies to raise standards, accelerate progress and improve attendance, indicate good capacity for further improvement.

Raising attainment, especially in English and mathematics, is recognised as a key priority. More settled staffing and effective leadership in these subjects are having a perceptible impact, with a marked upward trend bringing attainment broadly in line with national averages. Students are now making good progress. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and a more effective use of information about attainment and progress are consolidating and extending this improvement, particularly in the main school. However, questioning and marking are not yet consistently good, and students' evaluation of their work lacks precision. Development of an alternative curriculum in Years 10 and 11, underpinned by sensitive and sustained pastoral support, is successfully engaging those otherwise at risk of dropping out of education. It combines well managed work placements and college courses with in-school work on subjects such as English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). It is continually reviewed and appropriate changes made to strengthen students' preparation for the world of work. The school offers a broad and flexible range of options in Year 8 and at the end of Year 10. A productive shift towards more vocational and project-based learning has followed a review of attainment, attendance and school-leavers' destinations.

With support from external consultants, the leadership team is rigorously monitoring teaching and learning. The proportion of teaching that is good or better has increased, although best practice is not yet consistently embedded. Students are willing learners but do not always have opportunities to work independently and to make an active contribution to lessons. Well-directed support ensures that those with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress as well as others, but the most able are not always appropriately challenged.

As the school recognises, outcomes for sixth formers are less positive. Stronger management, with rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning, is now driving improvement. The rate of progress is satisfactory and rising, and most teaching has become better attuned to sixth-form needs.

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

- Through monitoring and professional development, extend and embed good practice in teaching to accelerate progress, ensuring that it:
  - provides the appropriate level of challenge to all students
  - consistently promotes active and independent learning.
- Strengthen the use of assessment to enhance learning by:
  - providing students with key points to use when evaluating each others' work, and keeping a check on the quality of their evaluations
  - regularly using questions to draw out students' understanding and fine tune the lesson's direction
  - ensuring marking consistently gives clear guidance on how to improve.
- Raise the rate of sixth-form progress by:
  - developing teachers' expertise in the use of information about students' attainment and progress
  - ensuring that teaching is consistently well attuned to sixth-form needs.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Prior attainment on entry is generally low, with few high attaining students. When the full range of qualifications gained by the end of Key Stage 4 is taken into account, attainment is broadly in line with national averages. There has been a sharp improvement in English and mathematics; school tracking and standards of moderated coursework indicate better results in 2010. Overall progress is good. □ Students have a positive attitude to learning, enjoy lessons, and are keen to gain qualifications to extend their future options. They work well in groups and pairs, listening to each other's views. They are keen to evaluate how well they have done, but the quality of evaluations varies □ they are sometimes insufficiently focused because students are not given clear enough guidance. Most groups learn well in lessons and make good progress. Sometimes, the pace of learning flags for the most able students when their work is not sufficiently challenging.

Students feel safe, confident that difficulties will be resolved promptly. Good behaviour was observed in lessons and around the school. Students treat each other and adults with consideration and take safety issues seriously. They understand what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and activities such as individual and team sports are well supported. Students value opportunities to take on responsibility and have impact, for example contributing to the development of the school's enterprise curriculum. They work with pupils in local primary schools and with the elderly, on schemes often arising from the business and enterprise specialism. Moral and social development is strong. Students' understanding of their place in modern multicultural Britain is less well developed. Attendance has improved and is now higher than average. Most students move on to further education, training or employment. Improving literacy and numeracy,

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competence in information and communication technology and a range of work-related skills equip students well for the future.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Amongst strengths observed in teaching were secure and enthusiastic subject knowledge, effective lesson planning, productive questioning skills in many but not all lessons, successful management of a range of approaches to match varying learning styles and a confident use of appropriate technology to engage students. However, the purpose of activities was not always clear and occasionally learning opportunities were missed when students' ideas and questions were not followed up. Students are given the right opportunities to evaluate their own and each other's work but the quality of evaluations requires careful monitoring. The marking of work is uneven. There is excellent practice but praise is not consistently complemented by guidance on how to improve, and expectations for more able students are not always sufficiently challenging.

The curriculum is inclusive and flexible, engaging students of all abilities. A skills-based

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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approach in Year 7, extended through project-based learning into Year 8, is strengthening students' confidence and raising aspirations. The business and enterprise and applied learning specialisms make a positive contribution, developing skills, promoting work-based learning and extending the range of qualifications available. Students move through Key Stage 4 and into Key Stage 5 at a pace best suited to their individual abilities and aspirations. They begin preparation for GCSE or equivalent courses in Year 9. Those who complete these in Year 10 may add further qualifications at the same level or embark upon sixth-form courses in Year 11. Since this structure was set up, attendance has improved in Year 11. □Activities such as 'focus days' promote a cross-curricular and inventive approach to learning. There is an extensive, well-supported programme of clubs and activities. Care, guidance and support are good. Considerable time and trouble are taken to consult and counsel students and their families over curriculum choices and pastoral issues. Liaison with external agencies and local services is well coordinated, giving strong support to vulnerable students. Provision is matched closely to the needs of students with statements of special educational needs. Students' transition from one stage of their education to the next is managed with care and attention to detail.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Senior leaders and key middle managers communicate high expectations, supported by well-applied analysis of information about attainment and progress, rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning, and an enterprising approach to curriculum development. Governors have a clear strategic vision and, through appropriate training and close engagement with all aspects of the school, are effective 'critical friends'. Good strategic planning and day-to-day decisions ensure that levels of attainment continue to rise for all students, whether following an academic or work-based pathway. There is a curriculum-driven and disciplined approach to financial management. Often steered by the business and enterprise specialism, good partnerships with local businesses, colleges and schools usefully extend the school's provision.

Equality of opportunity and esteem are well promoted through the effective monitoring, inclusive curriculum and careful response to students' and staff's individual concerns. Effective safeguarding procedures, including those relating to child protection, are in place and well understood at all levels as a result of good training. Extensive efforts are

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being made to develop a productive partnership with parents and carers, with some success. There are, for example, fortnightly opportunities for informal discussion at 'drop-in' sessions. The outreach programme successfully promotes students' understanding of their place within the local community. An international dimension is well supported by the curriculum and by links with schools abroad. A clear and appropriate strategy is underway to give students an improved perspective on a range of British communities.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Sixth form

Rigorous monitoring of students' progress and well-founded curriculum changes has arrested a downward trend and are enhancing attainment. □ Sixth-form leaders respond promptly to underachievement and the impact of interventions is carefully evaluated. Outcomes for students are improving, with most moving on to higher or further education, training or employment. Students benefit from individual action plans, regularly reviewed by tutors. However, individual subject teachers are not all using targets and tracking to involve students closely in understanding their progress. More exacting targets and accountability are increasing the proportion of teaching adapted to sixth-form needs, such as greater use of discussion, reflection and independent work, although good practice is not yet securely and consistently embedded. The curriculum is well extended by business and enterprise activities and by liaison with organisations such as the police and health agencies. While opportunities to take responsibility within the school are limited, sixth formers lead the school council and those in Year 12 mentor younger students. They are confident and courteous.



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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

## Views of parents and carers

While there is good support for information evenings and activities such as the parents' forum, a relatively small number responded to the inspection questionnaire. The school's pastoral care, and success in developing the confidence and supporting the progress of individual students, were praised. Concerns were expressed about the level of challenge for more able students and the wisdom of early entry for GCSE and equivalent assessments, about unevenness in the quality of teaching and inconsistencies in behaviour management.

Inspection evidence supports the positive view of care and guidance and, to a degree, concerns about challenge for the more able and unevenness in the quality of teaching, though teaching is good overall. Inspectors saw behaviour well managed and early examination entry generally improved students' outcomes.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 80 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1048 pupils registered at the school.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Maplesden Noakes School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	29	44	55	8	10	5	6
The school keeps my child safe	24	30	49	61	3	4	2	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	34	40	50	10	13	3	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	20	43	54	17	21	3	4
The teaching is good at this school	14	18	43	54	11	14	7	9
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	16	40	50	17	21	5	6
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	11	47	59	16	20	4	5
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	9	11	47	59	16	20	4	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	20	34	43	18	23	3	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	19	42	53	18	23	4	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	18	42	53	11	14	8	10
The school is led and managed effectively	8	10	45	56	11	14	6	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	15	44	55	9	11	9	11

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



30 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Maplesden Noakes School, Maidstone, ME16 0TJ

My colleagues and I greatly appreciated the friendliness and openness with which you helped us build up an accurate and balanced picture of your school during our recent visit. We agree with you that yours is a good school.

You are well supported by the variety of courses you can follow and the way in which they are matched to your abilities and interests. Improving attendance rates show that most of you are happy to be there. It was good to know that you feel safe in school and to see that you understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. We found that most of you are keen to fulfil your potential and have a positive attitude to learning. We noted that standards are rising and progress is good. The business and enterprise specialism contributes significantly to your learning and skills. We agree with you that pastoral care is good.

To ensure that your school continues to improve, we have asked your headteacher and her staff to ensure that:

- teaching consistently challenges all of you, including those who find work relatively easy, and ensures you take an active part in your learning
- the ways in which your progress is assessed, both in lessons and in the marking of your written work, make a real difference to your learning and that you are helped to become more independent, capable of reviewing your own and each other's work effectively
- information about the attainment and progress of those in the sixth form is used effectively and that the approach to teaching is always well suited to the sixth form.

You can all help by ensuring that you attend school regularly and set yourself ambitious targets.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham Her Majesty's Inspector

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