

# The Malling School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	118897
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	379704
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 June 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Patricia Metham HMI

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>	511
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	72
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Sams
<b>Principal</b>	Carl Roberts
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29–30 April 2009
<b>School address</b>	Beech Road East Malling Kent ME19 6DH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01732 840995
<b>Fax number</b>	01832 840486
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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
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<b>Inspection number</b>	379704



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Patricia Metham

Her Majesty's Inspector

Peter Lawley

Additional inspector

Kuljit Rahelu

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 19 lessons, taught by 19 different teachers, and held meetings with governors, staff and students. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection. They evaluated students' achievement over three years and reviewed schemes of work, policies, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, safeguarding documents and minutes of governing body meetings. They considered 46 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers, 62 responses to the students' questionnaire and 45 responses from staff.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller than average, non-selective school, with more boys than girls, in an area with grammar schools. While maintaining its own identity and leadership, The Malling School is federated with Holmesdale Technology College. In March 2009, the federation achieved Trust status. Forming a substantial section of The Malling School is the Tydeman Centre, a specialist unit giving support to over 90 students with statements of special educational needs. Predominantly, these students are on the autistic spectrum or have speech, language and communication difficulties. They follow a separate programme when they first join the school and are gradually integrated into the mainstream, with specialist support. The Malling School's academic departments are currently based in The School of Communication and Arts and The School of Science and Technology, each led by a vice principal. There are plans for four Schools of Learning in September 2012. Sixth form provision is extended beyond the federation through collaboration with two other schools. The Malling School meets the government's current floor standard, which sets out the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. It has specialist status for sport and science.

The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average, as is the proportion of students joining the school partway through their secondary education. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is below average and about two in every hundred students have English as an additional language.

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good and improving school, balancing the benefits of federation with the ethos of a small school in which staff and students know each other well and take pride in each other’s achievements. The school is not yet outstanding because attainment and progress, while improving, are uneven and not all teaching is good or better. Federation and school leaders understand the school’s strengths and development needs. Strategies to raise attainment and increase the proportion of good or better teaching are effective. Capacity for further improvement is strong.
- The sixth form is small, but good, with options extended through partnerships. Given students’ low prior attainment, the qualifications achieved represent good progress. Students are guided successfully towards courses that prepare them well for future education and employment.
- Rigorous monitoring establishes targets for teachers’ performance management and sets priorities for professional development. While teaching is good overall and improvements are evident, inconsistencies remain. Specialist teaching assistants contribute significantly to the learning of disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- Most students arrive with low prior attainment. This, and the number entering late in Key Stage 4, affect overall attainment, but there is an upward trend. Students make good progress, particularly those with statements of special educational need; however, the more able are not always fully challenged. Girls outperform boys but the gap is closing, as is that between those known to be eligible for free school meals and others. Weak literacy skills inhibit students’ attainment.
- Behaviour is good. Students are supportive and keen to learn. They feel safe – justifiably so given the school’s pastoral care and the thoroughness of safeguarding procedures.
- Students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well through the lively and inclusive curriculum, enhanced by the sports and science specialisms, and through leadership and teamwork opportunities.

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

- Build on recent improvements to ensure that attainment is steadily average or

- better and progress by all groups is good or better, particularly in English, by:
- fully challenging students of all abilities and closing the gaps in achievement between girls and boys
  - reinforcing strategies to improve students' literacy across subjects
  - rigorously monitoring and responding to the impact of changes introduced to challenge and extend more-able students.
- Embed consistently good practice in planning and teaching across departments by ensuring that teachers:
- have the flexibility of approach in lessons to meet students' immediate needs and levels of understanding and to take advantage of unplanned opportunities to extend students' thinking and enquiry
  - adjust their pace and timing of activities to match students' concentration spans and rates of working.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Overall achievement is improving; attainment varies between subjects but progress is good or better given students' low prior attainment. The proportion gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE or equivalent has increased to be broadly average, and also improved when English and mathematics are included, although still below average on this measure. Students who arrive late into Key Stage 4 often have very low prior attainment and, although they make good progress over their brief time in preparation for assessments, their attainment at GCSE or equivalent remains below average. The school has recently appointed a literacy coordinator and introduced strategies to strengthen literacy across subjects. There is evidence of improved reading levels in Key Stage 3, especially for boys. Moderated assessments in Key Stage 4 show more students making expected or better progress in English and a narrowing of the gender gap. Students could identify how they had improved over the year – in sentence construction, vocabulary and extended writing. Students made good progress in most lessons observed. Year 10 science students, for instance, were focused and responsive as they investigated the function of specialist cells within plants. Tasks were carefully matched to students' skill levels so that all felt a sense of achievement. Students' written work in the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) shows good progress.

Those known to be eligible for free schools meals progress less well than their school contemporaries but in step with similar students nationally. This gap is closing. Those with statements of special education needs make better progress than others in core subjects, especially mathematics and science. The school's outstanding success with these students is appreciated by parents and carers. For example, 'My child has made exceptional progress in all areas since joining this school. It has not only benefited him academically but also socially.' The proportion of more-able students is much smaller than average, and some of these have special educational needs that, on occasion, inhibit their progress in subjects requiring imagination and empathy rather than logic. Overall, more-able girls, who outnumber the boys, make good or better progress, while more-able boys progress less well than similar students nationally.

Sixth form students succeed most consistently in BTEC National Diploma subjects, making significantly better than average progress. The few who take A levels do well, but AS results are variable. Students are strongly motivated and respond constructively to targets and guidance.

Parents and carers expressed confidence in their children's progress and in the school's success in developing skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. These views were largely supported by inspection evidence.

## Quality of teaching

The proportion of good or better teaching is rising in response to scrupulous monitoring and well-targeted professional training. Typical strengths include: clear and well-structured planning, with strategies to meet differing abilities and learning styles; confident and enthusiastic subject knowledge; and questioning that checks and reinforces students' understanding, although it does not always challenge the more able. Teachers have a productive rapport with students; this gives students the confidence to have open discussion about personal issues. Behaviour management is firm but friendly, including a sensitive response to students who find it hard to relate confidently and calmly to others. Introduction of a proforma for the marking of work is leading to a more consistent approach in which strengths are identified and aspects for improvement clearly explained.

In less effective lessons, teachers do not always adapt their plans to match students' pace of learning or make the most of responses that might lead to unplanned, but productive, lines of enquiry or open up opportunities to practise more sophisticated literacy skills. When the pace is slow or when time given to an activity does not match their rate of working and ability to sustain concentration, students can become restless. Progress by the more able is inhibited when expectations are not sufficiently challenging and when these students are not encouraged to extend their thinking and be inventive.

Teachers and teaching assistants demonstrate confident skills in engaging and supporting disabled students and those with special educational needs. Lesson plans identify these students and outline targeted approaches. Among these are: use of visual aids to help students organise their ideas and see connections; organisation of topics into small and manageable chunks, with frequent assessment of students' understanding so that the next step is not taken until the first is secure; and reinforcement of learning through practical activities. Students are encouraged to be curious and to show initiative, knowing that their ideas will be given serious and constructive consideration. Good progress was made, for example, by Year 9 students, all with a statement of special educational needs, as they explored food chains amongst sea organisms. To do this, they were drawing on numeracy and literacy skills as well as interpreting scientific data.

Students appreciate the time given and care taken by teachers to support them. As Key Stage 4 students commented, 'They've pushed us a lot this year. It's been really

good.' 'The teachers are really caring. They're easy to talk to.' Parents and carers, especially those with children who are being supported by the Tydeman Centre, are enthusiastic about the quality and impact of teaching – a view supported by inspection evidence. This response from the parent of a Year 8 boy reflects the views of many others, 'The teachers are all very patient and know him well and teach him in a way that suits him and his learning style.'

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Overall, behaviour is good. A few parents and carers expressed concern about bullying and behaviour during lessons. Behaviour observed by inspectors in lessons and around the school was good. Scrutiny of behavioural records and discussions show this is the case over time too. Students feel safe. They have a good awareness of the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying and prejudice-based harassment, and say that instances are rare and are always dealt with promptly and well. Those who join the school midway settle quickly, extremely well supported both by staff and by other students. Students recognise that, for a minority, coping with routine aspects of community life can be challenging, and are tolerant and mutually supportive. This was well demonstrated in a rehearsal for the forthcoming musical production; students with a range of special educational and social needs were fully engaged in performance and technical support.

Attendance has been below average but recent strategies are driving improvement. Difficulties experienced by a relatively small number of students – those who are, for example, young carers for family members – and factors affecting some in the Tydeman Centre, have a disproportionate impact on overall attendance. Students say they are happy to come to school. This was echoed by several parents and carers; for example, 'My daughter is growing in confidence daily. She is being challenged to reach her full potential and loves to come to school.'

### **Leadership and management**

The school benefits from the federation's breadth and quality of expertise. Leaders and managers, including governors, at federation and school level, share a vigorously promoted and ambitious vision, focused on raising attainment. The federation's executive principal is a pace-setter for, and coordinator of, well-resourced and concentrated strategies to implement the vision. Governors are proactive and rigorous in holding the school to account. Analysis of attainment and progress provides a secure basis for planning, performance management and deployment of resources. The Malling School's principal shows flair and deftness in taking advantage of opportunities presented by the federation while engagingly promoting the best interests and the special character of the school. Increased responsibility and accountability for heads of department, closely monitored by senior leaders, are underpinning rising attainment, an increasing proportion of good or better teaching and an enterprising approach to curriculum development. To teach consistently well and to drive improvement in students' attainment and progress are key targets set for teachers' performance management. Formal and informal lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work establish priorities for whole-staff professional development and indicate where individual teacher support is needed.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, shaped by a commitment to equality of opportunity and esteem for all students, whose interests and combination of abilities and needs are exceptionally diverse. Good use is made of the federation and links with other schools. The Tydeman Centre's programme and its well-managed integration into the mainstream are outstanding, as parents and carers strongly agree. 'This school has been the saving grace for my son.' 'This is an excellent school with a first-class special needs unit.' Alongside an academic core, all students can pursue vocational courses that will serve them well in the future. Recognising that more-able students have been less well catered for, the school is introducing more academically challenging options, such as triple science. The sports and science specialisms have encouraged cross-curricular links, allowing students to see subjects in a wider context. Extra-curricular provision is extensive, including overseas trips, visits to places of historic and cultural interest and a well-supported programme of sports and arts activities. Attention to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates curriculum planning and provision.

Parents and carers and students are justifiably confident that school is a safe place. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and regularly reviewed, including recruitment, staff training, health and safety checks and risk assessments.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



15 June 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of The Malling School, East Malling ME19 6DH**

Thank you for the courtesy and openness with which you answered our questions and showed us your work when we visited your school recently. We agree that yours is a good and still improving school.

We were impressed by the way you accept the differences of each other and work together well, for example in preparations for 'The Wiz'. You do very well in some subjects, but your attainment and progress are less strong in others. The challenge for many of you is to improve your literacy skills. We could see, however, that you are all encouraged to do well, with sufficient variety of courses and styles of teaching to match most of your interests and needs. While not all teaching is as good as the best, we know that in most lessons your learning is well supported by teachers' subject knowledge and enthusiasm. The teachers show skill in responding to your ways of learning and give you opportunities to work in groups and pairs, which you enjoy. When marking your work they combine praise with useful guidance. Many of you are given individual help by specialist teaching assistants. It was good to know that you feel safe in school and that, when problems do arise, they are dealt with quickly and well.

So that your school goes from strength to strength, we have asked your principal to ensure that:

- all teaching is as good as the best, so that the level of challenge and the pace and timing of activities in lessons help each of you to do as well as you can, including those of you that find some work relatively easy
- effective steps are taken in all subjects to strengthen your literacy skills
- senior managers make sure that these strategies are working as intended.

You can help by having ambitious targets and working hard to achieve them.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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