

The Malling School

Beech Road, East Malling, ME19 6DH

Inspection dates 6–7 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students' overall progress and their progress in English and mathematics have been above average in the last three years.
- From low starting points, students attained the national average percentage of GCSE English A* to C grades. Students who took art, performing arts or sport studies also did well.
- The outstanding provision for students based in the Tydeman Centre means that they make outstanding progress in their work and personal development.
- Sixth formers achieve well in work-related courses which enable some of them to proceed to university. They mature into considerate and thoughtful young adults.
- Teaching has improved this year with more specialists in place, some high quality marking and skilful ways of bringing out the best in students' learning.
- The successful focus on improving students' reading and writing helps students to make good progress.
- The Executive Principal, Principal, senior leaders, managers and governors have all contributed to the school's improved results and quality of teaching since the previous inspection.
- Students feel safe and are happy at school. One described the school as 'motivational' and another said it was 'really good'. Parents are equally enthusiastic in their praise.
- Students' behaviour around the school is extremely good. Students are polite, respectful and considerate of each other. The large majority of them are keen to learn and work hard.
- Provision for students' personal and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It is planned thoughtfully and delivered most effectively. Students are very well prepared for life beyond school.
- Arrangements to ensure students' safety and to educate students about safety issues are outstanding. Bullying is extremely rare because relationships are strong.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in academic sixth form subjects and in some GCSEs, particularly some sciences, is too low. Not all teachers give students challenging targets.
- Students do not tackle problem solving in mathematics or apply their numeracy skills in other subjects often enough.
- Occasionally, learning slows down during lessons or teachers do not ask questions which explore students' understanding in depth. Some marking of students' work does not lead to improvement.
- A few middle leaders are not fully effective in raising standards and the quality of learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed part lessons. Several observations were carried out with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed form times and an assembly.
- Inspectors spoke to many students informally, as well as meeting representatives from all years and members of the school council.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and staff with responsibility for subjects and other aspects of the school's work.
- The lead inspector met the Chair and Vice Chair of the Trust Governing Body and two other governors.
- The lead inspector held a telephone call with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors visited the Tydeman Centre and The St James' Centre.
- Inspectors discussed their observations with teaching staff and examined a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, development plan and monitoring records. They also scrutinised information about progress, standards, exclusions, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors looked at a range of students' work in lessons.
- Inspectors took into account questionnaires completed by 47 members of staff and 64 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire.

Inspection team

Clare Gillies, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
James Waite	Additional Inspector
Anna Lawrence	Additional Inspector
Stephen Price	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school, with a small sixth form. There are more boys than girls. It is a non-selective school in an area with selective schools.
- Most students attending the school are White British. A below average proportion of students are from several different minority ethnic groups.
- A very low proportion of students speak English as an additional language, of whom only a few are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of students who receive support through the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding for disadvantaged, specific groups, including students known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children.
- About one third of Year 7 students receive catch-up funding which is for students who did not attain the nationally expected level in English or mathematics at the end of primary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is very high. The school has a specially resourced unit, the Tydeman Centre, for 90 students who have statements of special educational needs for speech, language and communication needs or for an autistic spectrum disorder.
- The school is federated with Holmesdale Technology College and together these schools have trust status under one governing body. The two schools' sixth forms work together and the Trust Executive Principal works in both schools.
- The federation schools are in a local teaching school alliance in collaboration with one special school, two secondaries and two primaries. The seven schools make up the Mid Kent Learning Alliance which supports teachers' professional development. The school is also a member of the Kent and Medway Progression Federation, an organisation of four Kent universities which supports sixth formers considering higher education. The Executive Principal sits on the board of this organisation.
- The school does not use any alternative education provision because the trust has established a small education centre within the St James' Community Centre. This is for up to 10 vulnerable students in Years 10 and 11 whose attitudes or behaviour mean that they are significantly underachieving or are at risk of permanent exclusion. Only a very few students were attending the centre during the inspection.
- The Executive Principal is also on the West Kent Board of the Kent Association of Headteachers and on the executive board of Leadership Learning in the South East. The latter develops aspiring middle and senior leaders and arranges internships for them. The Executive Principal has recently joined the management board of Maidstone and Malling Alternative Provision.
- Based on students' first GCSE entries for English and mathematics at the end of Year 10, when these students were in Year 11 in 2014, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. Taking into account students' improved results in English and mathematics when they retook these GCSEs in Year 11, the school met the government's current floor standards.
- In 2014 the school achieved Leading Edge School status, awarded for being a high-performing school based on its value added scores in 2011 to 2013. In the same year, the school was awarded the Careers Quality Mark, Centre of Excellence in Inclusion status and the Silver Quality Mark for Continuing Professional Development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in GCSEs and sixth form academic subjects by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what students can achieve and giving students challenging targets, particularly high GCSE grades for the most able
 - including greater depth of understanding and more problem solving in mathematics, and increasing the application of numeracy skills in other subjects
 - focusing on more students attaining GCSE C grades and above in double science qualifications and other subjects with a relatively low percentage of these grades in the past
 - strengthening progress in academic sixth form subjects.

- Develop the quality of learning by:
 - ensuring that teaching does not slow down during the long time allocated for lessons
 - spreading the excellent practice that exists in marking so that it is all of an equally high standard
 - checking that students read and respond to teachers’ written comments about how they can improve their work
 - developing the questions that teachers ask so that they probe students’ understanding in greater depth.
- Strengthen middle leaders’ leadership and management so that leaders are all equally effective in raising standards and improving the quality of learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal is rightly proud of how the school has moved forward since the previous inspection. With a very competent senior leadership team, he has successfully generated an atmosphere which fosters good relationships, behaviour and teaching. Increased staffing has strengthened teaching and achievement.
- Senior leaders are astute about evaluating the strengths and less successful features of teaching and learning. The Principal knows exactly where the school needs to develop further and, supported by the Executive Principal, the right actions are taken to move things forward.
- Staff morale is high, reflected in their predominantly positive responses to the questionnaire. All staff, including those new to the profession, rate the training and support to improve their practice highly. Well-prepared, in-house presentations and coaching sessions are bolstered by the teaching alliance, whereby advice and expertise are successfully shared between the local school members.
- The only reason leadership and management are not outstanding is because some middle leaders are not as effective as the best. The latter is exemplified by the leaders of English, humanities and the art, design and technology faculty. The determination of some others, such as in mathematics, to acknowledge elements of their work that must improve, supports the school's convincing capacity to develop further.
- Leadership and management of the Tydeman Centre are outstanding. The highly trained leaders, special educational needs coordinator and teaching assistants teach students English and mathematics and arrange and support bespoke, individual programmes for them.
- As Tydeman Centre students' communication and social skills develop, the students attend more mainstream lessons. Non centre based staff, with skills to match these students' needs, teach students several other subjects. Students who attend the centre are very much part of the whole school, joining in tutor time in the morning, assemblies, trips, visits and productions.
- The coordinator and learning support assistants also ensure that other disabled students or those who have special educational needs receive the support they need. This might be to raise low reading ages or anger management issues. Individual case studies confirm the school's effective provision for these students. The same high quality care is provided for looked after children and those who are young carers.
- Senior leaders monitor behaviour meticulously, and record and analyse all unacceptable incidents, so that actions can be taken to reduce them. An external review of the St James' Centre highlighted a few aspects requiring attention, such as monitoring students' behaviour and attendance before and after attending the centre. The areas for improvement were confirmed by the inspection; the school is addressing them vigorously.
- The curriculum is tweaked every year so that all students can succeed, supporting the school's promotion of equal opportunities. The focus is on English and mathematics, but this year more students are studying a modern foreign language and the humanities. Work-related courses are successful, particularly those taken by Year 11 students following an alternative curriculum that meets their needs.
- Several students in Years 7 and 8 enjoy studying Latin before school starts in the morning. Also promoting equal opportunities is the Hidden Heroes event which rewards students for a wide range of positive attitudes and achievements beyond their academic work. This is much valued by students and their parents.
- The use of funding for disadvantaged and catch-up students is reviewed carefully each year to assess its impact. Some interventions in mathematics last year did not have much impact so they have been changed. Helping to pay for some students to learn musical instruments or to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh awards has a positive impact on these students' school work.
- There are many extra-curricular activities ranging from the Duke of Edinburgh award (over 50 participants) to drama clubs. About half the students in each year attend at least one activity, and several attend three or more (computer, astronomy and science clubs, for example).
- An outstanding feature is the breadth and quality of students' personal development and the successful advice and guidance they receive about their future careers and post-school life. Examples include:
 - assemblies on Malala and the fight for education, hospices, respect or the use of the word 'gay'
 - external speakers on health, fire, road or internet safety, babysitting qualifications and careers
 - preparation for life in modern Britain, including running a mock election, learning about respect for other faiths and beliefs, or exploring the school's anti-discrimination stance in depth
 - developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, self-esteem, thinking and enterprise skills in form times and 'social values' lessons in Years 7 to 10. Topics covered include healthy eating, mental well-being, prejudice and discrimination, finances and global issues

- students learn about less fortunate people and are generous in raising funds for charity.
- The local authority provided intensive support in the past, but this intervention has declined as the school has improved. The federation and the Executive Principal's work enhance the school's work by sharing good practice, promoting leaders' development and enriching sixth form provision.
- Very effective arrangements for safeguarding and child protection fully meet current statutory requirements. There is tight vetting of staff and regular training sessions for them on issues such as female genital mutilation or extremism.
- Leaders have recently set up a forum for parents to meet them and discuss school life. Parents appreciate this as well as the regular contact they have, combined with newsletters and an informative website.
- Parents completing the online questionnaire were very positive. A majority would recommend the school. Several contacted the inspectors to express their praise. 'I trust you will see how wonderful the school is,' and, for the Tydeman Centre, 'It has truly transformed my son's life.'
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The trust governing body is most effective at combining support with probing questions about standards or the quality of teaching. Governors evaluate achievement against national standards and explore reasons for any underperformance.
 - Governors are equally astute about linking their thorough knowledge of the quality of teaching to outcomes. Strong teachers are rewarded, but a few have not moved up pay scales if their performance has been weak. Governors know that these teachers receive the best possible support to improve.
 - The governing body keeps a careful eye on the school's finances, particularly disadvantaged and catch-up students' funds. They receive a clear chart showing the cost for activities against impact on progress

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good because they are polite, kind and get on extremely well together. They respect and have very good relationships with teachers. They are welcoming to visitors and smile as they hold doors open or show them where to go.
- The well-considered behaviour policy and reward systems, to which students contributed, have contributed to students' acceptance of 'The Malling School Way' and their enthusiasm to behave sensibly.
- Just occasionally, students' focus on work drifts and students do not work unless chivvied to do so. Even when learning is good, students are occasionally inattentive when the teacher is speaking. There is a little way to go for students' learning behaviour to match their often outstanding behaviour outside the classroom.
- Tydeman Centre students' social skills and ability to study with others improve rapidly during their first few years at the school. The very few students studying in the St James' Centre know what is expected of them in terms of behaviour and work. They appreciate still being part of the school and having a chance to improve and return to learning with others.
- There have been no permanent exclusions this year. The number of fixed term exclusions has fallen each year since the previous inspection. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is average this year. The percentage of students who are persistent absentees has halved in the last two years. Students' punctuality has increased since leaders tightened up procedures in 2013.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Staff log all behaviour incidents meticulously, including those linked to racism and homophobia. These are few and usually linked to students using inappropriate language. There have only been two incidents of bullying this year which were dealt with promptly and effectively.
- Leaders succeed in educating all students about risks and safety and develop their self-esteem and happiness in and outside school. A centre student commented, 'The school has made me – I am now so different – it has given me confidence.'
- Leaders make sure that students' awareness of racism, homophobia, cyber and other forms of bullying has a high profile, with several assemblies and tutor times on presentations and discussions of sensitive issues. Students value and remember these and described them to inspectors in a mature manner; they fully appreciate that all forms of bullying are unacceptable.

The quality of teaching is good

- The volume and quality of work covered this academic year is stronger than in the past, particularly in subjects with new specialist teachers. Several teachers are skilful at adjusting their lessons in the light of students' progress or checking that the students understand and use subject-specific terms accurately.
- Students respond particularly well when they can be creative and active, designing clocks in resistant materials, working on African masks in art, discussing different songs in music, working in the fitness centre or writing projects in geography.
- Work for students in the Tydeman Centre is stimulating, generating outstanding learning. Year 9 students extend their vocabulary by identifying adjectives used to describe teenagers. Year 11 students prepare excellent folders of work for the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness qualification.
- Most staff give students clear, written guidance on how to improve their work or their examination grades. They also make sure that students respond to the advice given. Until all teachers replicate these models of excellent practice in all subjects, progress will not be as rapid as it could be.
- The same can be said about the questions teachers pose. Many challenge students to think hard, explain their answers and then extend them. Other questions require simple, maybe one-word answers which do not help teachers to explore students' understanding in depth.
- The best teaching in English focuses intensively on extending students' vocabulary, for example Year 10 students discussing what 'implicit', and 'infer' mean. Several other subject teachers also concentrate on vocabulary and extending students' writing skills.
- Year 11 students following an alternative curriculum make presentations which develop their literacy skills and social confidence. Reading ages, particularly for students eligible for catch-up funding, improve fast using programmes delivered by trained teaching assistants and external volunteer helpers. Numeracy skills are not yet promoted so well in all subjects.
- Lessons are 100 minutes long, which mostly works well, but this long time can contribute to a slightly relaxed pace and progress slows down. Lessons of 75 minutes will start in September.
- Learning support assistants work with disabled students and those who have special educational needs in the main school. Some show initiative and creativity which support students' learning well. On rare occasions they do not receive enough guidance from teachers so it is hard for them to be fully effective.
- Learning support assistants also support students who have arrived from abroad not speaking English, by translating instructions so they are involved in lessons as much as possible.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The school's overall progress was in the top third of schools nationally in 2011 to 2013. It was formally described as a high-performing school. Some of the qualifications and subjects students took no longer counted towards progress measures in 2014. Despite this, students' progress between entering the school and taking GCSEs in 2014 was close to that in the past.
- In recent years the school entered several students for GCSE English and mathematics in Year 10. In English, in 2014, the percentage of students who attained A* to C grades improved from below 50% to 67% when they took the examination again in Year 11. Results in mathematics improved a little, but students had not used their numeracy skills in other subjects or carried out problem solving enough to tackle the examination confidently.
- The policy of early entry suited this particular group of students' needs. A much higher percentage of students than seen nationally made the progress expected in English. Several students who did well on the first entry in mathematics also studied statistics in Year 11. With new GCSE syllabuses now in place, only a handful of students will sit examinations early in the future.
- Taking students' best English and mathematics GCSE results into account, all students did well in 2014. Low and middle attaining students attained a higher percentage of five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, than the national figures for the same groups.
- In the past, students entered the school with well below average standards. This is still the case, but the school's popularity has risen. This has increased the number of the most able students, from single figures in the past and present Year 11, to close to 20 in the present Year 10.
- The percentage of the most able students attaining five or more good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, has been very close to the national average in recent years. However, in several subjects these students do not have targets which challenge them to aim for the highest, A* and A grades;

teachers' expectations of what all students can achieve are not always high enough.

- Students attending the Tydeman Centre make outstanding progress in all years. They achieve many useful qualifications and acquire confidence to discuss their thoughts and learning. Their successes are not necessarily reflected in high GCSE grades because, for example, some of them are unable to interpret the language of examinations.
- With less than 100 students in Year 11 in 2014, the results of one fifth of them, based in the Tydeman Centre, had a significant impact on the school's headline GCSE results. This was also the case for several students with poor attendance who did not take all their GCSE examinations, or students who entered the school during Years 10 and 11. The school did everything possible to help these students.
- Most students with disabilities or who have special educational needs in the main school make similar progress to other students; a few of them have behaviour issues or do not attend regularly. The small number of students receiving a high level of support make well above average progress. Some are lower attainers or struggle to improve their reading which can hamper their progress in other subjects. Students in the St James' Centre made steady progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The gap between disadvantaged students' GCSE results and those of others in the school has narrowed each year since the previous inspection. In 2014 it was less than one third of a GCSE grade in English and half a GCSE grade in mathematics. The gap with others nationally was below one GCSE grade in English, but closer to two GCSE grades in mathematics. In all years, these students make at least the same progress as other students in the school. In English, in 2014, several of them made more progress than other students did nationally.
- Over 80% of the most able and several middle attaining students who took the three separate sciences attained A* to C grades in 2014. Those taking the double science qualification did not do so well. Other relatively low GCSE results, for example in design and technology and the humanities, were mostly explained by staffing issues; these have been resolved.
- There is no pattern in the standards reached by boys and girls. Boys did better in GCSEs in 2013, but girls did better in 2014. The small number of ethnic minority students make similar progress to other students.
- With more specialist teachers in place, progress is now good in practically all subjects; inspection evidence revealed this is the case in all years, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Externally verified mock examination results for 2015 GCSEs also predict better outcomes.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The sixth form is good because the great majority of students are well prepared for their future education and careers plans, for example enabling students on work-related courses to achieve well enough to proceed to university or preparing keen hairdressers for the working environment that best suits their skills. In 2014, only one student did not proceed to education, employment or training. Most of Year 12 students stayed on into Year 13.
- Students following work-related courses achieve very well. The sixth form is not outstanding, however, because the very small number of students taking academic subjects do not achieve so well. Students retaking GCSE English or mathematics, taught by specialists, progress towards better grades. This year, practically all students are taking a combination of work-related courses with one academic subject.
- Teaching is now good, with some examples of outstanding learning. In a Year 13 A-level communication and culture revision lesson, the teacher knew exactly when to give individual attention. Predictions for students' achievement in this subject, and in English, accountancy and psychology A levels, are for better outcomes this year. Students, rightly, describe the teaching in physics and performing arts as very helpful.
- As in the main school, very good relationships with teachers help students to learn well, although occasionally a too-relaxed atmosphere can allow time for distraction. There is some outstanding marking, for example in English, but it could be sharper in some other subjects.
- Students are encouraged to complete an extended project; half completed one last year, with practically all of them achieving the award. They learn research skills and develop their extended writing. Nevertheless, leaders appreciate that some academic A levels have not suited students' abilities.
- From September 2015, the school will offer the International Baccalaureate Career Programme (IBCP), which the IB website describes as 'deepening students' understanding in general areas of knowledge, engaging in a holistic education model that fosters an enthusiasm for lifelong learning'. This is a fairly new, respected qualification which leads well to higher education, apprenticeships or work.
- Leadership and management are good and increasingly effective. The recently appointed sixth form leader

has confronted the areas of weakness boldly and tightened up areas requiring improvement, such as students' attendance or development of their study skills. Students are fully involved in assemblies and presentations, and they receive the same high quality careers advice and guidance as in the main school.

- Students' behaviour is mature, considerate, and often exemplary. The students support younger students with reading and are involved in many whole school events. Those studying courses taught in part or wholly at the trust partner school are as happy with their sixth form years as others. Arrangements for their safety, including transfer for off-site lessons, and for them to learn about risks and safety are as outstanding as those in the main school.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118897
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	453411

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	667
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Sams
Principal	Carl Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 May 2012
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