

Inspection of The Malling School

Beech Road, East Malling, West Malling, Kent ME19 6DH

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders place pupils' character development at the heart of everything that takes place here. Staff encourage pupils to truly live out 'The Malling School Way', both in their learning and conduct. Pupils do the right thing because they are taught the importance of being 'caring, determined and reflective'. They are encouraged to develop their own identity while learning to understand and celebrate that of others. Consequently, there is a real sense of belonging here.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils have extremely high expectations of themselves and each other. When pupils join the school, they quickly learn what is expected of them. Pupils actively support the well-being of others. Any rare acts of unkindness or bullying are tackled immediately by caring staff. As one pupil said, 'Bullying happens in the world, but we don't accept it at this school.'

Pupils flourish in this exceptionally inclusive and ambitious community. They develop their interests and talents through a myriad of extracurricular activities. Many pupils delight in taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and enjoy the variety of trips on offer. Students in the sixth form relish being positive role models for younger pupils and take this responsibility seriously.

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

The school is exceptionally well led. Leaders and governors continually strive to provide the very best learning experiences for all pupils. They are always looking at what more they can do, especially to support the most vulnerable in the school community. Governors ask pertinent questions to challenge leaders and ensure that there is a continued focus on school improvement. There is a remarkable sense of teamwork among staff. They are extremely proud to work at the school and value the excellent training they receive.

Leaders have high aspirations for all pupils. They have made significant improvements to the curriculum to ensure that it is broad and challenging for all. For instance, leaders are taking robust action to increase the proportion of pupils opting to study a modern foreign language (MFL) at GCSE. This is to ensure the English Baccalaureate is at the heart of the school's curriculum. In the sixth form, there are ambitious programmes of study that are tailored to students' individual needs and aspirations.

Leaders have worked hard to ensure the curriculum is well defined. They have thoughtfully sequenced what pupils must learn and remember in each subject. As a result, the knowledge pupils learn grows in depth and complexity over time. Leaders understand the reading needs of pupils. As a result, pupils get the right intervention at the right time. Leaders are wisely implementing a systematic phonics programme for pupils who are at the earlier stages of learning to read.

The teaching of the curriculum is becoming increasingly expert. Teachers have very strong subject knowledge. They use this to present subject matter clearly and select appropriate activities so that pupils can practise applying their learning. Across all subjects, including in the sixth form, there is a clear focus on developing pupils' subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils use this vocabulary with precision to explain their ideas clearly. However, at times, a small number of teachers do not check what pupils know and understand carefully enough before moving them on to new ideas. When this happens, some pupils do not learn as effectively as they could.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is a significant strength. Pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision) receive highly effective support from well-trained staff so that they can access the full curriculum. Leaders clearly identify the support that pupils with SEND need. They ensure that staff know pupils' individual plans and pastoral needs well. This enables staff to skilfully adapt teaching so that these pupils achieve ambitious learning goals.

In class, pupils behave exceptionally well. They take great pride in their work and are eager to do well. No learning time is lost. Pupils, especially those in the sixth form, regularly ask insightful questions to extend their learning.

Opportunities to develop pupils into well-rounded citizens are plentiful. For instance, pupils organise litter picks in the local area and go on trips to places such as the theatre and Kew Gardens. Disadvantaged pupils are supported to take part in the multitude of rich experiences that are available to enjoy. Pupils and students in the sixth form are provided with regular, unbiased advice. This means they are well informed about the different career pathways and future study options available. Students in the sixth form go on to their choice of work, apprenticeships or study at a range of universities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created an especially caring community where pupils' safety, welfare and well-being are their highest priority. Appropriate checks are carried out on adults who work at the school. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They are alert to any changes in behaviour that may indicate a pupil is worried or at risk of harm. Staff report concerns promptly. Leaders ensure that they take swift action to ensure pupils' needs are met. They work collaboratively with other professionals to keep the most vulnerable pupils safe. Leaders continuously develop the curriculum to ensure it helps pupils to manage their own safety and well-being.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of teachers do not check what pupils know and understand

carefully enough before moving them on to more complex concepts. When this happens, pupils struggle to make links in their learning. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers consistently assess pupils' prior knowledge accurately to inform what to teach next so that all pupils achieve as well as they should.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	118897
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10257073
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,013
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	97
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mike Perry
Headteacher	John Vennart
Website	www.themallingschool.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 and 19 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, speech, language and communication needs or developmental language disorder. Currently, 116 pupils from Years 7 to 13 attend this provision.
- The school is currently using three registered alternative provisions. They are also using one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education

Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, staff and pupils. They spoke with a representative from Kent local authority. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the board of governors, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, science, MFL and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils informally.
- The inspection team considered the responses to the confidential staff questionnaire and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the additional free-text responses.
- The inspection team met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally during social times and in lessons.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school development plan and pupil premium funding plan.

Inspection team

Louise Walker, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Phillip Blagg	His Majesty's Inspector
Martin Smith	His Majesty's Inspector
Simon Potten	Ofsted Inspector

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