

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Maidstone Grammar School

Barton Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 7BT

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 October 2024

Outcome

Maidstone Grammar School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this welcoming, aspirational school. The school promotes pupils' personal development as well as academic success. The school has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils rise to the challenge. They are eager to learn and value the opportunities the school offers. As one parent said: 'The school nurtures pupils into becoming the best version of themselves.' As a result, pupils achieve highly in national assessments.

The school has a strong sense of community. Diversity is welcomed and celebrated. Shared values of respect and responsibility are tangible. The vast majority of pupils behave well. Pupils value the support they receive from the school and feel safe. Sixth-form students are excellent role models for younger pupils, often acting as mentors and coaches.

Pupils benefit from an amazing array of interesting and exciting experiences offered through the 'MGS Extra' programme. There is a plethora of clubs, societies and activities to suit everyone, such as backgammon club and computing clinic. Many pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme or the combined cadet force, which fosters pupils' leadership skills. Trips, both local and international, such as to Mount Everest base camp, are inspiring.

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

The school's ambition to develop high-achieving, all-round pupils is being realised. Governors play an important part in driving this ambition. Staff are very proud to work here and there is a strong sense of collegiality. Staff at all levels feel supported, including teachers in the early stages of their careers. Leaders take great care of staff well-being and workload.

Pupils follow an ambitious curriculum. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to know and be able to do. Consequently, pupils gain increasingly complex knowledge as they get older. Pupils build a solid academic foundation in key stage 3. In key stage 4, high numbers of pupils study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects alongside others chosen from a very wide range. Many pupils continue their learning in the sixth form, studying an impressive choice of academic subjects offered to them. The school goes to great lengths to ensure that external students to the sixth form integrate quickly into the life of the school.

Teachers have expert knowledge and plan appropriate activities. Many teachers are successfully using the teaching strategies in the school's 'teachers' toolkit'. They design activities to help pupils recall previous learning and use questioning to test pupils' understanding. They adapt their teaching to suit pupils' needs and give pupils advice on how to improve their work. Consequently, most pupils make strong progress through the curriculum. However, not all teachers are using these strategies consistently well. This hinders some pupils from progressing through the curriculum as strongly as they could.

Most pupils join the school with well-developed reading skills. The school actively encourages pupils to develop a love of reading. The library is a treasured resource and popular with pupils who enjoy browsing the shelves. The school quickly identifies those pupils who would benefit from additional support. These pupils join a bespoke programme so that they become more confident and fluent readers. The school identifies effectively where pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) need extra help. These pupils follow the same curriculum as their peers. Teachers provide subtle classroom support where needed.

Behaviour in the school is calm and lessons are purposeful. The school has recently designed a new behaviour policy which is being gradually rolled out. Early indications show that this is helping to regulate the behaviour of a minority of pupils who struggle to uphold the school's high standards of conduct. 'The Hub' is a safe space where pupils can access emotional support. It is highly valued by those that use it.

Most pupils enjoy school and attendance levels are high. The school works closely with the families of pupils who find coming to school difficult. School staff do all they can to resolve any difficulties. This work frequently results in an improvement in pupils' attendance.

The way the school supports pupils' personal development is superb. The school has designed a carefully considered programme that teaches pupils how to stay safe and look after their health and well-being. Pupils have extensive opportunities beyond the classroom which foster their creative and physical talents alongside leadership skills. The vertical tutor group system enables pupils across year groups to work together and learn from each other.

High-quality careers advice and guidance helps pupils make well-informed choices about their futures. 'Old Maidstonians' give readily of their time to mentor current pupils in this

regard. Thus, pupils are well prepared for their next steps, with many going on to prestigious universities or degree apprenticeships.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers are not yet using the teaching strategies in the school's 'teachers' toolkit' consistently well. This hinders some pupils from progressing through the curriculum as strongly as they could. The school should continue its focused work to develop teachers' pedagogical skills to ensure that the curriculum is delivered effectively in every subject.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in January 2019.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	118835
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10341524
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1415
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	359
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ceri Norey
Headteacher	Mark Tomkins
Website	www.mgs.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered provider of alternative provision to support the education of a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, pupils and seven members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- An inspector held a telephone discussion with a member of staff at one provider of alternative provision.
- Inspectors focused inspection activity on the following groups of subjects: English, history, mathematics and physical education; and art, computing and modern foreign languages. For each group of subjects, inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including early career teachers, about behaviour and their workload in school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential online staff survey. They took account of the responses to the online parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments. Inspectors considered the views of pupils shared in the confidential online pupil survey and through discussions held with pupils throughout the school.

Inspection team

Paula Sargent, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Wendy Martin	Ofsted Inspector
Giles Osborne	Ofsted Inspector

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