

Inspection of Meopham School

Wrotham Road, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent DA13 0AH

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 April 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend this inclusive and positive school. They value the supportive and nurturing relationships they have with staff.

Leaders have high aspirations for pupils and make sure that all experience effective teaching overall. The new headteacher and his leadership team have acted promptly to address the small minority of subjects that had lower results than most in the 2022 GCSE examinations. Current pupils in most subjects are now making effective progress through the planned curriculum.

Leaders identify well the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils are supported well through the adaptations that teachers make for them in lessons. In 'The Windmill' provision, pupils benefit from additional support. All pupils thrive due to the warm and supportive relationships with staff.

Leaders' high expectations of pupils' conduct ensures that behaviour is mostly calm and settled. Occasionally, a few pupils do not consistently meet these expectations.

Pupils enjoy the enrichment programme, which includes a range of clubs and the school magazine, 'The Meopham Monthly'. They are proud to take on some of the leadership opportunities, such as sitting on the school council and, for sixth-form students, the chance to be 'reading leaders' and 'sports leaders'.

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

The new leadership team has put in place a range of effective steps which are having a positive impact on curriculum and behaviour. Leaders have re-established clear behaviour systems to ensure that pupils behave well. This has had a demonstrably positive effect on behaviour in the school, and leaders continue to embed this practice to ensure that behaviour is of a consistently high standard across the school.

In most subjects, leaders have carefully constructed a curriculum that sequences the knowledge and skills that all pupils need to know, including for pupils with SEND. However, while leaders have begun to strengthen this in other areas, it is not yet fully embedded in all subjects.

In the vast majority of lessons, pupils are focused and engaged with their learning, although there are some where behaviour is less focused, such as where there are temporary staff. Generally, pupils ask and answer questions thoughtfully and grapple with increasingly complex ideas. Across subjects, staff have strong subject knowledge and give clear explanations of lesson content. This was especially evident in teaching in the sixth form.

Overall, teachers check pupils' knowledge carefully, identifying misconceptions and ensuring that they adapt their explanations in order that pupils fully understand what they are being taught. However, on occasion, teachers do not take the opportunities to precisely check pupils' understanding before moving on to the next topic. As a result, some pupils do not make effective progress through the planned curriculum in those subjects. In most subjects, pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of the knowledge and skills they are being taught at the time of learning. However, systems to ensure that pupils retain their learning in the long term are not yet fully in place.

Leaders have prioritised reading and provide specific support to pupils who struggle to read with fluency. Trained sixth-form students act as 'reading leaders' to support younger pupils in the school to develop their reading. Leaders are increasingly developing initiatives around reading for pleasure, which are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' confidence and enjoyment of reading. This continues to develop as the programme becomes more embedded.

Currently, some pupils' attendance is not high enough across the school, especially in the sixth form. Leaders have put in place increasingly rigorous systems to identify the barriers for pupils attending well. Their work to address this is beginning to have a positive impact. However, this is still in its early stages.

Pupils benefit from an effective programme of study, which develops their personal, social, health and economic education. This includes what the school calls the 'Meopham EBacc' (English Baccalaureate) in the sixth form. In the sixth form, leaders have recently developed more opportunities for students to become active citizens and engage with the local community, but the impact of these new initiatives is not yet evident. There is a well-considered careers programme in place, which helps all pupils to plan for their futures and understand their next steps. Pupils value the career day fairs, as well as opportunities to talk to careers advisors to support them in making effective choices about their futures.

Senior and trust leaders have worked closely together to identify the areas for improvement and put in place appropriate actions. Trust leaders support and challenge leaders well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an embedded culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff receive training so that they know how to identify and refer pupils who might be at risk. Leaders make timely referrals to seek support from appropriate agencies. They know their pupils well and keep detailed records of any concerns.

Leaders complete appropriate checks to ensure that adults who work in the school are safe to work with children. Governors know their safeguarding responsibilities

and hold leaders to account effectively. Leaders use the curriculum to teach pupils about keeping themselves safe, including an understanding of online risks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Rates of absence, particularly of persistent absence, are too high. As a result, not enough pupils attend well enough or benefit from the education the school provides. Leaders have identified the barriers to pupils attending well and actions to address these are starting to have a positive impact. Leaders need to continue to embed the systems and processes now in place and ensure that they are applied consistently so that more pupils attend well.
- A small minority of pupils still do not consistently meet the high standards that leaders have for behaviour. Leaders need to continue to embed their renewed behaviour policy. They must ensure that all staff understand and follow the expectations systematically and insist on the same high standards of behaviour throughout the school.
- Currently, some staff do not always know what knowledge pupils have remembered over time. This reduces the effectiveness of their planned learning activities. Leaders need to ensure that all staff have the knowledge to develop effective methods to ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, can recall their knowledge in the long term and, in turn, secure the best possible outcomes.

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	139075
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10265835
Type of school	Secondary Modern (non-selective)
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	936
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	65
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Goodson
Headteacher	Glenn Prebble
Website	www.meophamschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 and 23 January 2019

Information about this school

- There have been a number of changes to leadership since the last inspection, including the headteacher.
- The school joined the Swale Academy Trust in 2013.
- The school currently uses two registered alternative providers.
- The school has a specially resourced provision on site called 'The Windmill', which was visited as part of the inspection.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information 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.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team held meetings with the headteacher, executive headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector met with the members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors, as well as the chief executive officer of the trust.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, physical education and food technology. 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 held meetings with safeguarding leaders, governors, teachers and pupils. They scrutinised the single central record and sampled safeguarding records.
- Inspectors spoke by telephone to the alternative providers used by the school and with school leaders about their use.
- The inspection team also met with leaders in the sixth form, visited sixth-form lessons and spoke with groups of sixth-form students.
- An inspector visited 'The Windmill' provision, spoke with leaders, visited intervention sessions and spoke with pupils.
- The inspection team also took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and governor minutes.
- The team spoke with pupils about their experience of the school. They took account of pupil, parent and staff views through conversations and responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Marian Feeley, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Mark Roessler	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Fearon	Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Lower	His Majesty's Inspector

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