

# Meopham School

Wrotham Road, Meopham, Gravesend, DA13 0AH

**Inspection dates** 12–13 November 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b> <b>2</b>
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.

- The academy is well led and managed. Leaders have an unrelenting focus on improving the quality of teaching and increasing students' progress. They understand strengths and address areas for development well.
- Students' achievement has improved rapidly in a wide range of subjects in a short period of time. The proportion of students making expected progress and more than expected progress is near to that seen nationally. In some subjects and year groups students make rapid and sustained progress.
- The gap in achievement between disadvantaged students and others nationally and in the school is closing fast.
- The academy has a rigorous approach to checking students are on track with their learning and receiving helpful support to catch up when they need it.
- Teachers consider the needs of students of different abilities well when they plan and teach. As a result most students learn well.
- Teachers ask students questions that help them deepen understanding and provide useful feedback that helps them improve.
- Students typically behave well in lessons and around the site.
- Leaders make sure that students are kept safe.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides suitable opportunities for students to develop spiritually, morally, culturally and socially and prepare for life in modern Britain.
- The small sixth form meets the needs of its learners. They are taught well and receive helpful support and careers advice and guidance that prepare them well for their next steps in life.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Disadvantaged students are not catching up with their peers as rapidly in some subjects and year groups as they are in others.
- More-able students are not always challenged well enough in science for them to make expected or better progress.
- Governors challenge leaders well; however, they are not holding leaders tightly to account for some of the academy's work.
- The sixth form does not offer physics, chemistry or biology A levels which limits opportunities for learners to study science-related subjects at top universities.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons, six jointly with senior leaders. In addition they undertook a number of shorter visits to lessons to look at students' behaviour and engagement in learning at Key Stage 4.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other member of the governing body, groups of students and the Principal of the Swale Academies Trust.
- Inspectors reviewed a number of documents including safety procedures, behaviour and attendance records, self-evaluation and planning documents and the academy's records on performance management and teaching and learning.
- Inspectors took into account 53 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View) survey and 50 questionnaires completed by staff.

## Inspection team

Diana Choulerton, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Richard Butler

Additional Inspector

Brian Netto

Additional Inspector

Patricia Slonecki

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school converted to become an academy on 1 February 2013. It is a member of the Swale Academies Trust. When its predecessor school was last inspected it was judged to be a school causing concern.
- The academy is a much smaller than average sized secondary school. It has a small sixth form.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds. A very small number of students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for children who are looked after by the local authority and students known to be eligible for free school meals) is average. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The school has a small, local authority funded, unit for students with autism, The Nick Hornby Centre. The unit has capacity for 16 students.
- A small number of students receive alternative education through the Northwest Kent Alternative Provision Service, in Gravesham and Dartford.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy receives external support from the Principal of the academy trust who is a National Leader of Education.

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

- Make sure that teaching in science consistently challenges the most able learners, so they achieve as well in science as they do in English and mathematics.
- Ensure that disadvantaged students continue to catch up with their peers and close any other remaining gaps in progress between different groups of students, so all are achieving equally well.
- Increase the range of opportunities for progression in the sixth form, by enabling students to study physics, chemistry and biology A level if they wish to.
- Make sure governors hold leaders stringently to account for all aspects of the school's performance by regularly considering:
  - the progress of different student groups in as much detail at Key Stage 3 as they do at Key Stage 4
  - the impact of the academy's work to prepare students for life beyond school, to make sure it is highly effective.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher took up her post in August 2014. She played an instrumental role in improving teaching and raising achievement in the academy in her previous role as deputy headteacher. She is making sure that all leaders in the academy continue to focus tirelessly on improving teaching further so all students can learn exceptionally well. A culture of continuous improvement and learning is clearly evident.
- Leaders at all levels make sure the academy's policies are rigorously applied. This has resulted in high levels of consistency in how teachers plan and teach lessons and uphold good student behaviour.
- Leaders have effective approaches in place for checking the quality of teaching. Senior and middle leaders gather evidence through formal lesson observations, regular short visits to lessons, and scrutinising students' work and achievement data. They have an accurate understanding of how good teaching is over time and what needs to improve.
- Staff value the opportunities provided for professional development. After-school sessions and training days focus on issues of importance to all staff and teachers receive support and training related to their individual development needs. This includes programmes to help the most skilled teachers to improve further. Leaders are on nationally recognised courses relevant to their responsibility level and four teachers in the academy are studying for masters degrees. Teachers newer to the profession are supported well.
- Leaders track students' progress diligently and make sure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed. A learning leader has responsibility for each key stage. The deputy headteacher, pupil premium co-ordinator and learning leader meet fortnightly, to identify any students who are falling behind. They arrange support to help students catch up and review its effectiveness. Support includes small-group English and mathematics catch-up sessions and opportunities to study online.
- Leaders have made good use of pupil premium funding to help eligible students to catch up with their peers.
- The Nick Hornby Centre is well led. The support students who attend the centre receive is highly individualised. It enables them to learn well in their mainstream lessons and typically make good progress.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. The academy emphasises the importance of academic subjects but all students also study at least one vocational subject from Year 9 onwards. The curriculum effectively supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including through sports clubs, music and drama productions and educational visits. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons and assemblies consider diversity and human rights and stress the importance of being a good citizen. An assembly seen during the inspection looked at the rights of the child and that of girls, in particular considering the plight of 270 girls kidnapped in Nigeria and the work of Malala Yousafzai.
- The Swale Academies Trust provides regular and helpful support to the academy. It carries out regular external reviews of teaching to corroborate the findings of school leaders. The trust's Principal visits the academy weekly to provide valuable support for the headteacher. Leaders and teachers have opportunities to learn from others in the trust.
- Leaders monitor closely the achievement and attendance of students who attend alternative education provision, to make sure that it meets their educational needs. Leaders receive six written reports a year on students' progress and regular attendance records. A learning mentor visits the provision to check and support students' progress on a less formal basis.
- An impartial careers advisor helps students make informed choices about which courses to choose at GSCE and where to study after the age of 16 and on leaving the sixth form. Leaders are working to make sure this provision is equally effective for students in Years 8 to 11 as it is in the sixth form.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body, which is a subcommittee of the trust's full governing body, has a good understanding of how well the academy is doing and holds leaders to account well for most aspects of the academy's work. Governors receive regular, detailed reports on the work of the academy and discuss these with leaders, challenging them when necessary. They make sure that pay is linked to teachers' performance and have a clear oversight of the school's finances and resources. They fulfil their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding. Governors do not consider some aspects of the academy's performance as well. They do not consider in enough depth how well the academy's curriculum promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development or the progress of students in Key Stage 3.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good. Students have a positive attitude and come well equipped and prepared for lessons. They listen well to teachers' instructions and move quickly to tasks set for them. In a small number of lessons there is sometimes low-level disruption, but teachers act swiftly to deal with this so it rarely disrupts other students' learning.
- Students who attend the Nick Hornby Centre typically behave well in lessons even when they find circumstances challenging. The centre provides them with good support and teaching assistants help them overcome any difficulties they may experience in lessons.
- Students conduct themselves well around the school site. They typically treat one another and adults with respect. Students dress smartly; the school strictly enforces the uniform code to make sure this continues to be the case.
- Attendance is near to the national average, although with some variability between year groups.
- Punctuality to lessons is good. Announcements made over the school loud speaker after the end of breaks and lunchtimes prompt students who are dawdling to move promptly to lessons or face being put into detention.

**Safety**

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe and cared for and parents overwhelmingly agree. Students know how to keep themselves safe in the real world and online.
- Leaders make sure that students know how to take care of themselves and others. For example, the academy does not have a perimeter fence and shares the site with the local library. Students know how to question any unknown adults seen on site and know what to do if they have any concerns.
- Bullying is rare. Students have a good understanding of issues relating to discrimination and bullying including that which is homophobic or racist.
- Arrangements to make sure that students are safe when they attend off-site provision are sound.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Teachers plan and teach lessons that engage the interest of students and enable them to learn well. They take into account students' previous learning and target grades to set students of different abilities suitable levels of challenge. For example, in a Year 9 art lesson about how portraiture has changed over time, all students were required to analyse and describe the differences they could see between portraits from different eras and most to think about the reasons for these. The most able students were starting to consider how different artistic movements had influenced these changes. As a result, all students were able to engage in the lesson and deepen their understanding of portraiture.
- Teachers question students effectively to check their understanding, help them master concepts and think more deeply. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson the teacher pushed students to expand on the initial answers by saying, 'tell me more' and 'why' in response to students' answers, enabling them to learn more.
- Students receive regular helpful written feedback which tells them what they are doing well and what they need to improve. They are given time in lessons to respond to this, improving work they have already done or considering what they must focus on in the next piece of work. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson students spent time reflecting on what they would need to do in the future to improve.
- More-able students are not as effectively challenged in science as they are in other subjects.

**The achievement of pupils is good**

- Students typically achieve well in lessons and make good progress over time. In 2014 the proportion of students making expected or more than expected progress in English by the end of Key Stage 4 improved dramatically on the previous year. It was above that previously seen nationally having been well below it in 2013. Progress in mathematics also improved and was in line with last year's national figure. Students' achievement markedly improved in most other subject areas. Academy information shows that proportions of different groups of students in Key Stages 3 and 4 on track to make expected or better progress in English and mathematics are above that seen nationally. Some variability in achievement remains between different groups in some subjects and year groups, but these are increasingly small.
- Disadvantaged students are making much better progress than previously and the gap between them and other students is closing fast. In 2013 they achieved, on average, more than a grade less than their peers in English GCSE and almost two grades less in mathematics. In 2014 the gap between these groups closed to less than half a grade in English and less than a grade in mathematics. The proportion of disadvantaged students making expected progress in English was close to that of other students nationally and in mathematics the gap between these groups was half that seen in 2013. The in-school gap between these groups was almost halved in both subjects.
- Pupil premium funding has been used well for these students, for example by assigning each student a member of staff to support them and providing one-to-one literacy tuition for those who need it.
- Students who join the academy with low levels of attainment make good progress because they receive good support to help them catch up. This includes extra literacy lessons and numeracy sessions taught by specialists. Students use electronic reading tablets and online mathematics resources to engage their interest and help them learn well.
- The progress of the most able students in the academy is typically strong. The proportions on track to make expected and more than expected progress in most subjects are high. Science is an exception to this. Sixteen more-able students in Year 11 last year got a grade C in science although their target was a B grade. This remains an issue in some year groups in the academy because not all science teachers are challenging students effectively enough.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are making increasingly good progress. This is most evident in Key Stage 3, where the proportion on track to make expected or better progress is above that seen nationally for all students.
- The small number of students who attend alternative education are making reasonable progress.
- Leaders entered many students for mathematics and English GCSE early in the last academic year. This did not limit the most-able students' opportunity to do well as those who did not reach their target grade retook the examinations in the summer. However, nationally published performance data for 2014 will only report the results from the first entry, so will not reflect how well students had achieved by the end of Key Stage 4.

**The sixth form provision is good**

- Leaders have worked effectively to make sure the sixth form enables learners to gain the results they need to pursue their interests at university and in work.
- Learners typically achieve well. Good teaching is enabling them to make good progress. The proportion of learners who made average and above average progress by the end of Year 13 in most subjects was high in 2014. Disadvantaged learners exceeded their target grades. Students' progress in English literature was not so strong but still broadly in line with that previously seen nationally.
- Leaders check learners' progress in each subject regularly. They meet with them individually to discuss what is going well and what needs improving. Suitable support is arranged for them when it is needed. Sixth formers value this individualised support.
- When not in lessons, learners spend their time productively. Supported silent study, individual tutorials, PSHE lessons, assemblies and work in the wider school community all help them prepare well for life beyond school. Learners complete online surveys to help leaders judge the impact of this.
- Students have a well-developed understanding of issues related to discrimination and show tolerance and respect. They have a thorough understanding of how to keep themselves safe including when using social media and value the knowledge that teachers have about these issues. They can discuss concerns and get support if they need it. They are prepared well for life in modern British society.
- Students receive helpful, impartial careers advice and guidance and they have clear well-thought-out plans

for their futures. The careers advice they had before they entered the sixth form was not so thorough or helpful. Leaders have acted to put this right and support students who originally selected courses that limited their career and university options. For example, one learner is supported to gain an extra qualification needed to get on to the university course of her choice. Another has individual mathematics tuition to help her prepare for a career in primary school teaching.

- Until recently, students had not gained useful work experience. The new head of the sixth form has acted quickly to resolve this, making sure that students get work placements that link well with the subjects they study and their future career plans.
- The curriculum meets the needs of current sixth formers well. It offers a range of academic and vocational subjects that enable learners to progress to university and pursue the career of their choice. However, it does not offer science A levels, so does not provide a pathway for learners to progress on to science and other related courses offered by top universities. The head of sixth form is exploring opportunities to collaborate with other schools to resolve this.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139075
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	447816

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	531
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	75
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Darren Stevens
<b>Headteacher</b>	Suzanne Dickinson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01474814646
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