

Wrotham School

Borough Green Road, Wrotham, Sevenoaks, TN15 7RD

Inspection dates 06–07 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	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	Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher provides inspired leadership. He gives clear direction for the school and is supported by a good leadership team. Together they have brought about improvements to the quality of teaching and achievement.
- Students join the school in Year 7 with average skills. GCSE results are well above average at the end of Year 11. Students make good progress.
- Students make good progress in GCSE English and mathematics. Information and communication technology, along with food and design technology, are strengths of the school.
- Achievement is good in science, the creative and performing arts.
- The achievement of students on work-related courses is at least good.
- Teachers provide high quality marking and feedback. As a result, students have a clear understanding of how to improve.
- Teaching is good, because teachers provide interesting activities in subjects, leading to good levels of concentration in lessons. A wide range of activities make a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Students' behaviour is good. Their conduct and manners are impeccable. They are courteous, polite and show respect for others. They have positive attitudes to learning.
- Students feel extremely safe at school because of the high standard of care provided. Staff teach students about safety and how to stay safe.
- Subject leaders are effective and check that assessment is used consistently well by all teachers to support students' learning and accelerate their progress at both Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Governors are very committed to the school and hold the headteacher robustly to account for the school's performance.
- Students enjoy and actively participate in a wide range of house events and artistic, cultural and sporting programmes available to them.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school and are especially supportive of the way their children are looked after and kept safe.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes, students are not challenged sufficiently to ensure they achieve as well as they should.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Students studying the academic subjects do not achieve the good outcomes secured on work-related courses.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 33 lessons, of which eight were seen jointly with members of the school’s leadership team.
- Assemblies and tutorial sessions were visited. The inspection team also made short visits to lessons during a number of walks through the school to look at students’ attitudes to learning and behaviour.
- Inspectors held meetings with four groups of students and talked informally to students during breaks and at lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, and senior and subject leaders. Inspectors also spoke to members of the governing body.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents including the school’s evaluation of its own performance, plans for improvement, policies, and records of students’ behaviour and attendance. Safeguarding documents were also scrutinised.
- One hundred and six responses to the online survey, Parent View, were considered. Account was taken of the findings of recent school surveys of the views of 214 families. Inspectors also noted the 21 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Robert Ridout, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Susan Reid	Additional Inspector
Noureddin Khassal	Additional Inspector
Mark Roessler	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Wrotham School converted to become an academy on 1 April 2013. When its predecessor school, also known as Wrotham School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- The school is smaller than the average sized secondary school.
- The school is non-selective operating in an area with a selective system.
- A new headteacher was appointed in January 2012. The current deputy headteacher was recruited in 2012 and two assistant headteachers took up post in September 2014.
- A new director for the sixth form was appointed in January 2015. The subject leader for mathematics was also appointed this academic year.
- Most students are from White British or Other White backgrounds. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below that found nationally.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is well above average.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 attend courses or alternative provision off site at Maidstone College.
- The school does enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that there is a greater proportion of outstanding practice to raise achievement further by:
 - ensuring the high expectations and aspirations observed in the core and other subjects are extended to all areas of the school's work
 - continuing to raise the consistency of best practice in all lessons.
- Raise standards in the sixth form, particularly in the academic subjects, to at least the good levels already secured in the work-related courses.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's leadership is underpinned by strong values and a moral purpose. He has a passionate determination to overcome barriers caused by disadvantage and ensures all students are well prepared for their future lives in a modern Britain. Students show tolerance and respect for those with different faiths and beliefs. Recent school elections mirroring the national election process promote a good understanding of the democratic process and the rule of law.
- The school's own newly introduced 'Passport to Success' programme has delivered significant improvements in punctuality to school and to lessons, attendance and attitudes to learning. As a result, many parents hold the school in high regard and the school is oversubscribed.
- Leaders and managers at all levels have high expectations of all and are keen to see the school succeed. They have a realistic view of how effective the school is and accurately identify the key strengths and areas for development. Effective leadership, with best practice being shared across staff, is leading to good and better teaching that ensures students typically make good progress.
- Some aspects of leadership and management are outstanding, including the leadership of the pastoral support and promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are taught to be caring, reflective and responsible young people with a keen interest in right and wrong in the world around them. Many have leadership roles within the school and contribute positively to their own success.
- Responses to the staff questionnaire were positive, indicating much confidence in the leadership and the direction in which it is taking the school. Changes to the school's leadership have strengthened the team, but it is still too early to see the full impact in all aspects of their work. New leadership in the sixth form has begun to raise the standards of teaching but the full impact on students' achievement is yet to be seen.
- Subject and other leaders are effective in providing good support and development for their teams. They check that assessment is used consistently well by teachers to support students' learning and accelerate their progress at Key Stages 3 and 4. Middle leaders recognise their greater accountability to senior leaders and also value the greater communication and support they receive as they continue to secure better standards within the school.
- Teaching is led and managed well. Teachers are held to account for the progress of students. Teachers' performance is assessed in a robust and rigorous way. Pay awards are linked to good teaching and the good achievement of students. Underperformance is appropriately challenged.
- The range of subjects taught is broad and balanced at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Schemes of work support good learning. Sixth formers are able to access an appropriate range of academic and vocational courses, but the school is not complacent and is improving its offer further to better meet their aptitudes, interests and needs.
- The school has completed its review and consultation on how teachers will check on students' progress and their levels of skill following the removal of National Curriculum levels. The school plans to implement its preferred approach to assessment in the new academic year.
- Careers advice is very effective. The school provides a good programme to help guide students in their choice of courses. Outside speakers and teams visit the school to run events and give an additional insight about future possibilities. Students make informed course choices that match their chosen career pathway.
- The school uses the pupil premium funding effectively to support disadvantaged students. Care is taken to identify reasons why individuals are falling behind and the money is spent on helping each catch up. Most of the support goes on interventions to help them make up lost ground in English and mathematics.
- There is off-site provision for a small number of students in Years 10 and 11. This is monitored closely by a member of the leadership team. Students attend well, are safe and make good progress.
- Extensive opportunities are provided to expand students' perspectives and to promote equal opportunities. Good relationships are positively promoted within the school and discrimination is not tolerated. Students value the wide range of additional cultural and sporting activities they can access.
- The local authority provides minimal support for the school. Leaders and teachers at the school develop their experience through the external partnerships it enjoys with schools locally and nationally.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective and meet current statutory requirements. As a result students feel very safe and are vigilant about ensuring their own and others' safety.
- The school and governors work well with parents. In response to the online questionnaire, Parent View, nine out of every ten parents would recommend the school to others and most believe their children to be well looked after, happy and safe at the school.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is skilled and knowledgeable. It holds school leaders to account to secure good teaching and achievement and strives to raise standards further. Governors check how well the school is doing in comparison to other schools nationally. They visit the school regularly to look at the quality of teaching and the standard of work done by students. Governors know how well the school is performing and what still needs improving.
- Governors have a good knowledge and understanding of the national teaching standards. They use them effectively in setting targets for teachers and only good performance is rewarded. Governors know where teaching is strong and how all staff are helped to improve. They support the headteacher to act quickly to tackle successfully any underperformance.
- Governors ensure that all monies are used well to meet the needs of the school. They track the range of the support given to students who are eligible for additional government funding and the good effect this has on their achievement.
- The school's finances are well managed and available resources are employed effectively.
- Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures meet current requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are polite and welcoming to visitors. They are proud of their school and celebrate each other's achievement through their 'passports to success'.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning, and behaviour in lessons is consistently good. Students listen to instructions and sustain concentration on their work. They enjoy working with each other, especially on practical activities, and value the chance to learn from each other. They particularly enjoy the range of visits and other opportunities that they are given to enrich their life at the school.
- Occasionally, the level of students' interest and enthusiasm fails because they are not highly enough motivated to engage with the tasks in hand. For example, a group of boys were initially less enthusiastic than the girls to settle to a written task they had been asked to do and, although they did not misbehave, it did slow their learning. The boys knew practical tasks would follow the writing, but they would have preferred to engage in these activities first.
- Students are proud of the contributions they make to the school as house captains and school councillors, eco warriors or representing the school on a team. Some proudly shared their success in the winning of the 'Kent mathematics challenge'. Others talked of how they had grown in confidence having progressed through to the finals of the local and regional Business Awards.
- Punctuality to school and to lessons is good and attendance is at least average and improving reflecting the students' enthusiasm for school and enjoyment of lessons.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. They feel very safe in school and around the site. Parents strongly agree. Visitors to the school are checked closely. Students learn to behave in safe and secure ways, for example in practical lessons and while doing physical activities.
- Students know that there are various types of bullying but incidents at the school are extremely rare. They are clear what to do if they have concerns and say that 'teachers deal with reported incidents quickly and effectively'.
- Use of derogatory or discriminatory language is extremely rare and actively discouraged in assemblies and classroom sessions. Students are aware of the effect that extremist behaviour or discrimination could have on their tolerant school.
- School records show that there are few instances of bad or any unkind behaviour of any description and when these occur they are dealt with straight away and effectively. There are no recorded instances of racist or homophobic name calling; staff and students spoken to were not aware of having heard any and were surprised by the question.
- The school's policies and procedures for safeguarding are rigorous and reviewed regularly by leaders and governors. Students are vigilant about any risks they may encounter and emphasised how they look after each other. Some stressed 'they chose the school because it is like one big family' and others said they 'simply do not want to leave'.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- There are very positive relationships between staff and students. This promotes a positive atmosphere in classrooms and promotes mutual respect. As a result, students want to do well and are prepared to work hard.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They plan work carefully and use questions effectively to check students' understanding and ask further questions to encourage students to think more deeply about the subject and their responses. This promotes good learning.
- Teaching assistants work effectively alongside teachers and provide good support to both disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs. This is helping students to make consistently good progress.
- The marking of students' work is effective. Students receive clear guidance consistently on how to improve their work or what they need to learn next. They are given the opportunity to discuss and consider these comments and students routinely respond to the teachers' suggestions for next steps. The good use of self-assessment helps students to reflect on what they have learnt, identify errors and come up with the next steps which they will take to reach the next level of learning.
- The quality of teaching is good. It is not outstanding because, over time, teachers have not consistently made use of assessment information to ensure that work is demanding enough in some subjects. This means that students do not always make as much progress as they could.
- Mathematics is taught well and the curriculum is covered well. However, the development of numeracy skills in all subjects is not planned for as fully as the development and consolidation of literacy skills.
- All aspects of English are taught well and students are encouraged to read often. Those that require help receive the support they need to read fluently. Teachers encourage students to speak correctly and use subject specific vocabulary where appropriate. This has a positive impact on students' writing and their written work is of a good standard in content, style and presentation.

The achievement of pupils**is good**

- Students enter the school with broadly average attainment. They make good progress from their starting points and sometimes do better than this to achieve standards that are consistently above average in a wide range of GCSE subjects. In 2013, the proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C grades in their GCSE examinations, including English and mathematics, was well above the national average. These standards were sustained in 2014.
- From their different starting points, the proportions of students making expected progress and the proportions of students exceeding expected progress in English and in mathematics are consistently good.
- Achievement is good in science, and the creative and performing arts. Information and communication technology, along with food and design technology, are also strengths of the school. Levels of achievement in both history and geography are now rapidly improving.
- Since becoming an academy, the school has taken decisive and effective actions to further improve students' achievement. This is well supported by the work seen in students' books from the previous academic year. Students' work from the current academic year clearly indicates that this rate of good progress continues.
- In the past the school entered students early for GCSE examinations. This did not always provide them with their best grade and the school has reviewed its approach to early entry. Fewer students are now entered early and only when the school is convinced it is in the best interest of the student.
- A few students enter the school with high levels of attainment in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2. Those that do usually make similar progress to high-attaining students nationally.
- The achievement of the small number of students who attend alternative provision is carefully monitored by the school. All students make good progress and achieve good qualifications in English, mathematics and in the wide variety of bespoke work-related qualifications they study.
- In 2013, students eligible for the pupil premium made less progress than their peers both in school and compared to other students nationally. On average, students achieved almost one grade less than their peers in the school and around the country in English and mathematics. In 2014, the gap closed showing that Year 11 students who sat their GCSE examinations were making better progress than previously. The

difference had been closed with students achieving approximately one half of a grade less in both subjects when comparing their best results with those of their peers in school and nationally.

- Disadvantaged students continue to be supported effectively by all adults working in the school. The school's data indicate that students supported through the pupil premium make the same or faster progress compared with their classmates and the gap between their attainment and that of their classmates has narrowed considerably.
- Leaders are taking effective action to ensure equal opportunities for all students, foster good relations and tackle discrimination. Disabled students and those with special educational needs learn well in lessons because the support given helps them to complete the set tasks as well as they can. As a consequence of this support they make similar good progress to other students in the school.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Achievement in the sixth form has improved. Students examined in academic courses do not achieve and make the same good progress as achieved by students following work-related programmes. As a result, overall levels of progress and standards of attainment have not yet reached the national average.
- The new director for the sixth form has successfully implemented more robust and rigorous monitoring of the attendance and achievement of students. Attendance levels have risen significantly and are now well above the national average and there is strong evidence this more focused challenge is also improving achievement in most subjects. However, insufficient time has passed to enable the full impact of the changes to be seen in the sixth form.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is good. Students are enthusiastic about the school and engage readily with their learning. Students enjoy very positive working relationships with all staff. They feel extremely safe and very well supported at the school. This is most evident in the confident and positive way they meet, greet and relate to others.
- The information and guidance offered to all students when entering the sixth form is comprehensive and effective. Ongoing support is routinely provided to students to ensure they remain on track to successfully secure places in higher education or employment. Progression rates to university have almost doubled in the last two years with a little over half going on to study courses in universities around the country.
- Students contribute to the learning of others. Many coach and support younger students to improve their literacy skills. Sixth form students are excellent role models for the other students in the school.
- The sixth form curriculum now has an appropriate balance of academic and work-related courses which allow all learners of different abilities to achieve. Study programmes are appropriately tailored to meet the individual needs of students. As a result they are increasingly successful and better prepared for the next stage in their education or employment.

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	139542
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	449948

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	758
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	133
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Smith
Headteacher	Matthew Wright
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected.
Telephone number	01732884207
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