

Inspection of New Line Learning Academy

Boughton Lane, Maidstone, Kent ME15 9QL

Inspection dates: 12–13 November 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a family feeling about the academy. Pupils like belonging to their 'house'; they are happy and enjoy coming to the school. Pupils feel safe and well supported by staff, especially the student support managers. The morning 'line-up' helps to cement the strong relationships between staff and pupils. Staff know their pupils well. Around the building, there is a calm and orderly atmosphere. Pupils told us that they trust that adults would sort out the few incidents of bullying that occur. One pupil described the school as 'life changing' because of the 'help and support from staff and friends every step of the way'.

Leaders and staff expect the very best of pupils. The school motto 'believe and achieve' drives everything they do. Pupils say that, since more permanent teachers have joined the school, teaching has improved. This is helping pupils to learn more effectively. Pupils, staff and parents also say that behaviour has improved hugely.

Pupils appreciate the wide range of trips, visits and clubs they can get involved in. Leaders are keen to offer pupils new experiences, such as the trip to view the entrants for the Turner prize or participating in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.

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

The school has improved a lot over the past two years. Current pupils are achieving well, because teachers help them to learn in a logical way. Teachers plan work carefully to make sure pupils know more and can do more as they move through the school.

In Years 7 to 9, pupils study a wide range of subjects. Year 7 pupils have extra time for developing their literacy. Many pupils in the lower school are studying two languages now. This means that more pupils have the opportunity to achieve the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). In key stage 4, pupils follow an exciting range of GCSE subjects. A few Year 11 pupils learn in 'The Gateway', where they get excellent support to prepare them for their next steps.

Teaching is strong in many subjects, such as English, mathematics, science and performing arts. Pupils respond well and are keen to learn. Teachers quickly challenge any poor behaviour so that learning is not interrupted. Inspectors saw many examples of teachers making pupils think hard, though sometimes they could push pupils even more. Sometimes teachers do not check well enough that pupils have grasped key ideas before moving on, so pupils can feel a little lost. This is particularly so in history, and sometimes in English.

Teachers plan interesting ways to help pupils remember information. Pupils mostly remember things they have learned recently, but they sometimes forget things they learned in the past. Teachers need to make sure pupils have locked information into

their long-term memory.

The school is very inclusive. Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. Teachers and teaching assistants understand these pupils' needs and shape lessons to help them learn in the best way. Attendance of pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils is improving quickly, though some still miss too much school.

Leaders develop pupils' wider talents and understanding of the world very well. Pupils have daily lessons in personal, social and health education. During the inspection, pupils learned about democracy. For example, Year 7 pupils enthusiastically shared their ideas on what they would do if they were the prime minister. Large numbers of pupils participate in extra activities, such as football academy, school shows and chess club. Careers education is very successful. Pupils are thoroughly prepared for their next steps when they leave the school.

All staff are very committed to making the school the best it can be. They are well supported by governors and trustees. Leaders make sure that staff well-being is a high priority. Staff appreciate this.

Leaders work hard to make links with parents and carers and with the local community. For example, the annual Christmas party for elderly local residents is a highlight of the year. The academy's reputation is rising, and more parents are choosing it than ever before.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make thorough checks to ensure that staff are safe to work in the school. The staff with specific safeguarding responsibilities know what they are doing. The systems to spot whether pupils are at risk work well, and leaders keep careful records. Staff and governors are trained in safeguarding. They know what to do if they have concerns. When extra help is needed, safeguarding leaders contact the right people in other organisations, such as social services or the police. Pupils know how to stay safe, including when online. Leaders make sure that pupils who attend off-site learning provision are safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers question pupils effectively in most subjects, in order to test pupils' understanding. Leaders must ensure that teachers in all subject areas check systematically that pupils have grasped key ideas before moving on, and adapt their teaching as necessary. This will ensure that pupils know more and remember more.

- Recently implemented strategies to develop pupils' memory and recall are not yet having enough impact. Pupils cannot always remember what they have learned in the past. Leaders should ensure that pupils revisit their prior learning so that they are able to remember and recall their knowledge.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are much more positive than in the past. They are mostly keen to learn. Teachers should capitalise on this by asking more of pupils in class, so that they achieve more highly.
- While school attendance for all groups is greatly improved, there are still a number of disadvantaged pupils and some with SEND who are missing too much school. This is hindering their ability to make progress through the curriculum. Leaders should continue to work proactively with these families so that the attendance rate continues to improve.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	135372
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10111147
Type of school	Secondary Modern (non-selective)
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	563
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Marilyn Hodges
Headteacher	Paul Murphy
Website	www.futureschoolstrust.com
Date of previous inspection	10–11 October 2017

Information about this school

- The school is a member of the Future Schools Trust. The trust includes another secondary academy, where all sixth-form provision is managed, a primary school and a nursery.
- The school is no longer receiving formal support from the Every Child Every Day Academy Trust. The proposed move to this trust is no longer taking place.
- A very small number of pupils in key stage 4 attend lessons at Maidstone and Malling Alternative Provision, a pupil referral unit. A small number of pupils attend the trust's own alternative provision on the school site, The Gateway.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We held a variety of meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteachers and other senior leaders. The lead inspector also had a meeting with the chair of trustees and a telephone conversation with the chair of governors.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history and performing arts. For each of these five subjects, we had a meeting with the

subject leader to look at their curriculum plans, visited several lessons with leaders, talked to pupils about their work, looked at those pupils' books and talked to the teachers whose classes we had visited. We also visited lessons in business studies, geography and art and design. Inspectors looked at learning in The Gateway and in Year 11 'booster' lessons in English, mathematics and science.

- In order to inspect safeguarding, we looked at the school's records of checks on staff, the school's safeguarding policy and the way leaders record any concerns about pupils. We held meetings with the school's designated safeguarding lead and pastoral staff. We spoke to pupils and staff to get their views on safeguarding.
- An inspector telephoned the alternative provider used by the school.
- We spoke with pupils in meetings and around the school sites.
- We spoke with a wide range of staff, including teachers and support staff.
- We looked at the 55 responses from the staff questionnaire and the 38 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, including 42 free-text comments. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire, but we considered the school's own pupil survey responses and the views of pupils during discussions with inspectors.

Inspection team

Paula Sargent, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Bagust	Ofsted Inspector
Keith Pailthorpe	Ofsted Inspector

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