

Inspection of The Holmesdale School

Malling Road, Snodland, Kent ME6 5HS

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 April 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Glenn Prebble. This school is part of The Swale Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Michael Wilson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Goodson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils appreciate the school's very strong, warm and welcoming ethos. Older pupils help younger pupils to integrate. This helps to further strengthen the culture as pupils move up through the school. They value the individualised pastoral care that they receive and know who to talk to if they have worries or concerns. Pupils who join the school mid-year are very positive about the way they are helped to quickly settle in.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils value the range of ways that they are supported academically. As a result, many build their learning over time and achieve positive outcomes. Sixth-form students achieve particularly well in the courses they study.

Pupils are proud to attend the school. They mostly rise to the school's high behaviour expectations. Where pupils need more individualised support to do this, the school provides it well. Pupils are respectful and supportive of each other. Staff manage behaviour consistently, meaning pupils know what is expected of them. Most learning is calm, and breaktimes and lunchtimes are orderly.

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

The school's 2024 key stage 4 cohort faced a particular range of challenges. Many joined the school after suffering periods of fragmented education. Since then, the school has strengthened and reviewed the way that it supports pupils who join the school at different points to help them to achieve well. The school's previously low 2024 key stage 4 outcomes in national tests therefore do not reflect how well pupils in the school today are learning.

The school's curriculum precisely identifies what pupils need to know and when they need to know it. In many subjects, this results in pupils quickly building their knowledge. However, in some more recently developed curriculums, teachers do not consistently use appropriate activities that help pupils to know, remember and use their knowledge as much as they could. This means that pupils' knowledge does not always develop as securely as in the more established curriculum areas.

The checking of pupil's knowledge and skills is systematic and consistent. Teachers ensure that pupils have a detailed understanding of how and where to improve their work. Should pupils have gaps in their knowledge, the school uses a range of support to help them catch up. They receive individualised help, and this contributes to pupils' positive attitudes to education.

The school's strong learning culture means that most pupils are highly motivated. This is particularly evident in key stage 4 and in the sixth form. However, in key stage 3, the positive learning culture is not as consistently embedded. Some lessons are not as focused, meaning some pupils become disengaged. Additionally, on occasion, staff are less adept at using the school's behaviour systems to ensure that all pupils remain

focused and positive in class. This results in some less successful learning and occasional disruption.

Pupils are very well known by staff. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow the same curriculum as their peers. Their needs are precisely identified, and they are well supported in class, which supports their positive achievements.

Students are very proud to attend the sixth form. They appreciate the highly personalised education provided. Learning and support are precise, and students are taught how to analyse and improve their work. They develop the subject-specific skills and knowledge that they need and consequently build rich subject knowledge.

Reading, oracy and vocabulary development are integral to the school's curriculum. Pupils who are not yet fluent readers are quickly identified and receive targeted support to catch up. As a result, pupils across the school develop reading skills and value reading as an important part of their education. The school's library hosts lessons and reading activities, which provide reading inspiration for pupils of all ages.

The school prioritises pupils' wider education through a broad range of activities and trips. Pupils are taught about staying safe and have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. Effective and targeted careers sessions help pupils to recognise the importance of their education. Many pupils develop exciting and ambitious plans for their future.

Leaders at all levels have a secure understanding of the school and the areas that most need development. Decisions are taken in the best interests of pupils, however recently they joined the school. This is recognised by pupils who consistently talk positively about the support, community and compassion with which the school operates.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The implementation of the curriculum in some subjects is not consistent. This leads to variability in how well activities help pupils to know and remember the planned content. Where this is the case, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. The school must ensure that teaching approaches match the intent of the curriculum and lead to pupils securing the necessary knowledge and skills across all subjects.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning at key stage 3 are not as strong as those demonstrated by older pupils. As a result, not all key stage 3 pupils learn as much as they can in readiness for key stage 4. The school should continue to strengthen the

implementation of the key stage 3 curriculum and consistency of behaviour for learning to ensure younger pupils learn as well as their older peers.

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	147897
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10379936
Type of school	Secondary
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	562
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	54
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Goodson
CEO of the trust	Michael Wilson
Headteacher	Glenn Prebble
Website	www.holmesdale.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average secondary school.
- The school is part of The Swale Academies Trust.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.
- 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

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, curriculum leaders and other staff.
- The inspectors met with a member of the trust board, the chair of governors, the CEO and other leaders of the trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, physical education and science. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documents, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also visited lessons from a range of other curriculum subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ed Mather, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Julia Mortimore	Ofsted Inspector
Andy Rees	Ofsted Inspector

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