

Mascalls School - Information for candidates

Mascalls is a co-educational comprehensive school, which serves Paddock Wood and the surrounding villages. Many students, however, come from a 20-mile radius including from Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge, Sevenoaks and Kings Hill. The school has been heavily oversubscribed in recent years and currently has 1440 on roll.

To support this expansion an extensive building programme was started and included the completion of an innovative new building in September 2006 to house Art, Design and Technology and the Performing Arts and a community art gallery (www.mascallsgallery.org). Further building works include 2 sports halls and additional classrooms which were completed in September 2007. A full size 3G all weather pitch was opened in September 2008 and plans are now being drawn up for another £5.5 million project which will provide new accommodation for Maths, English and Science and Media Studies.

Despite being in a selective county, average prior attainment at Mascalls is at or above the national average. There are few children with English as a second language and no significant ethnic minorities in the school apart from students with a Gipsy Traveller background most of whom are now settled in local communities.

Academic attainment

Pupil performance at both SATs and GCSE has improved dramatically over the last few years. In 2008, 77% of students gained 5 A*-C grades and 55% gained 5 A*-C grades including English and Maths. The contextual value added measure (CVA) was 2021.4 – placing the school in the top 15% nationally. The A level average point score was one of the highest of the non-selective schools in Kent.

Student Organisation and the curriculum

KS3

The 240+ students in each year group sit NFER Cognitive Ability Tests before entrance to the school. On the basis of these tests and their KS2 SATs results, they are divided into 2 bands. The upper band studies 2 languages in KS3 and the lower band studies only one language and has extra lessons in the core subjects. There is, in addition, a small group of between 10-15 students who have weak language skills who have a specialised curriculum, which does not include a modern language.

Students are setted by ability within each of these bands and separately for each of the core subjects, allowing the core departments to set by ability in those subjects. Class sizes are between 28-30 in the upper band and 18-28 in the lower band – with smaller groups in technology.

KS4

The school provides very broad and differentiated curriculum at KS4. Around a 50% of students follow the traditional GCSE programme, and another 40% will combine GCSEs and OCR National qualifications. A smaller group will spend one day a week at West Kent College studying a wide range of vocational programmes and a few students spend time on an alternative programme developing basic skills

Vertical tutoring

In June 2006 the school moved to a vertical pastoral structure. Students belong to one of five Learning Communities and this is a strong feature of the school's operations. Curriculum areas too are grouped into these learning communities and their teaching and some support staff are acting as advisors to advisory groups of between 4 to 18 students ranging in age from 11-18. These advisory groups are the main organisational unit in the school and advisors are expected to remain with their advisory group for at least 4 years.

There are three 45-minute advisories each week and, at these times, advisors are required to ensure that the students voices are heard, problems identified and, if possible, shared, and pupil progress monitored. The advisor is charged with ensuring that every student is known well to them and with identifying their individual learning needs and ensuring that these are made known to their teachers. They are also required to create a "family" atmosphere within the advisory group so that students are mutually supportive. Advisories are citizenship in action and all raise money for charity, many have links with local community groups and businesses, some are engaged in their own enterprise activities and many have links with schools across the world.

Now in its third year of operation and this is what Ofsted have said about them:

"The introduction of mixed-age 'advisory groups' of students that meet regularly during the week is contributing powerfully to the development of positive attitudes and students' self-belief". Ofsted 2007

"The curriculum is outstanding" -Ofsted Citizenship subject inspection 2008

Personalised learning

The development of a personalised approach to learning is a consistent and key strand in the School Improvement Plan for several years and in particular the following and we are not a long way down the road of embedding the following in the school:

- Student voice
- Assessment for learning
- Learning to Learn – especially the development of thinking skill
- Use of ICT in the development of autonomous learners
- Project based learning in some areas of KS3
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The school year

The year is divided into 5 seven-week semesters and the academic year begins in June. This enables an additional 7-week semester in which to complete the KS4 syllabus. Term dates are set out on the school's website. www.mascalls.kent.sch.uk and there is a two week holiday in October.

The school day

This is currently under review. Lesson length varies – but most are 45, or 90 minutes for practical subjects. Students in KS3 have 75 minutes in the middle of the day and KS4 have a break of 45 minutes. Lessons on Mondays will end at 2.30 to enable staff to engage in collaborative planning until 4:30pm.

ICT

All teachers have laptops and the school has full wi fi coverage enabling Internet access anywhere in school. The school uses the internet portal of its management system, CMIS, to register students online and for staff to record assessments and behaviour events. These are available to parents via a secure link. Teachers are also able to access the school's network and CMIS at **all** times from home or anywhere else, via the internet.

Almost all classrooms have a digital projector and many have interactive whiteboards and all have access to class sets of laptops.

All schemes of work are available electronically and the school is now working on the development of a virtual learning environment (VLE)

Training school activities and CPD

As a training school and Investors in People school, we are committed to the support and professional development of staff at all levels. There is a team of professional tutors who support all newly qualified teachers and the 35 or so ITT students that train at the school each year. A specially tailored twilight programme is delivered to NQTs in addition to the extensive twilight programme that is available to all staff.

Specialist school activities

As a specialist school we have the following features:

- A unique art gallery which is the only one in the UK with approval to borrow major works of art from national collections
- An enhanced curriculum in the visual arts
- Links with 5 feeder primary schools, a secondary school and a special school
- An extensive programme of extra-curricular arts activities
- A full time artist in residence
- A community arts coordinator who manages the gallery and the community adult education programme

Extra-curricular activities

The school has an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities. These include after school sports, lunchtime clubs, gifted and talented GCSE groups, and many school visits. In the last few years there have been trips to Tanzania Iceland, Zambia, Aeolian Islands, New York, Prague, Paris and Spain, Morocco as well as many to destinations within the UK. All staff are encouraged to take part in such activities

Extended Schools

The school's activities are extended in the following ways:

- Extensive letting of the premises to local community groups
- On site Youth Wing
- Adult Education - either provided by KCC or as part of our specialist community programme

Leadership

The Leadership Group currently consists of:

Headteacher – Stuart Reeves

Deputy Headteacher – Mark Waller – Systems and Operations

Deputy Headteacher – Karen Gunn - Quality of Teaching and Learning

Assistant Headteacher –Catherine Bourne – Head of Foster Learning Community – work related learning

Assistant Headteacher – Michael Cater - Head of Riley Learning Community – director of the specialists' arts school activities

Assistant Headteacher – John Vennart- Head of Hockney Learning Community – assessment for learning, pupil tracking, gifted and talented.

Assistant Headteacher – Kay Rowe - Head of Hepworth Learning Community – SEN, Quality Assurance

Assistant Headteacher – John Wastell - Head of Westwood Learning Community – Post 16 and L2L