

Dover Grammar School for Girls

Frith Road, Dover, Kent, CT16 2PZ

Inspection dates 14–15 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Students and staff share a love of learning. The level of challenge and intellectual rigour in lessons is consistently high and, as a result, all groups of students make rapid and sustained progress. They consistently achieve examination results which are well above the national average.
- The strong relationships between teachers and students contribute to outstanding attitudes to learning. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and plan their lessons well. Questioning is very effective and students learn very well by themselves.
- Marking and feedback to students are strong. However, they do not consistently have the opportunity to respond to guidance for improvement, particularly in their written work.
- There is an extensive range of artistic, cultural and community activities, which have a positive impact on students' achievement and personal and social development.
- Students' moral and social development is exemplary. As individuals they regulate and manage their own behaviour very well and exhibit high levels of peer support for each other. They greatly appreciate the trust the school places in them and, as a result, their behaviour is outstanding.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Sixth form students make a very valuable contribution to the school community. Students have high academic aspirations and are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Students new to the sixth form comment on the work ethic and the level of individual responsibility expected of them. They work with younger students in a variety of contexts and are wonderful role models.
- The headteacher, senior team and governors share a determination to improve outcomes for students. They have been successful in improving the quality of teaching which has raised achievement.
- The leadership of a few middle leaders and the governing body could be developed further.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons of which eight were joint observations with senior and middle leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of shorter visits to lessons and activities to evaluate particular aspects of the school's work.
- Meetings were held with school staff including teachers, subject and senior leaders, groups of students and representatives of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 26 responses to the online parent survey, the views of parents and carers attending a Year 7 parents' evening and took account of the 56 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including students' work, attainment and progress data, subject and school evaluation records, development plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspection team observed the work of the school, including in social spaces at break and lunchtime, spoke informally to students and visited registration and assemblies.

Inspection team

Janet Hallett, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Elson	Additional Inspector
Gillian Keevil	Additional Inspector
Nourredin Khassal	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Dover Grammar School for Girls is a smaller than average-sized selective girls' school. It has a humanities specialism.
- The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and service family children) is below average but above that of similar selective schools. There are no looked after children and no children from service families currently at the school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is low compared with most schools. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also low.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Boys are admitted into Year 12 and make up just under a sixth of the sixth form roll. A small number of students from a neighbouring school also attend for some sixth form lessons.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the outstanding quality of leadership and management already evident in the school ensuring that:
 - governors challenge senior and middle leaders even more stringently about the impact of actions on school performance
 - the leadership of a few middle leaders is raised to the high quality of the vast majority so that all teachers in their subjects and phases are held to account for students' performance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students enter the school with prior attainment that is above the national average but low compared with other selective schools locally and nationally. By the end of Year 11, the attainment of all students is high in comparison with national averages and in the top 20% when compared with similar schools. This high attainment is across almost all subjects and for all groups of students. Over seven years all students, including the most able and those who speak English as an additional language, make excellent progress and achieve well.
- The proportions of students making expected progress and more than expected progress in English and mathematics are well above the national averages for all groups of students. In 2012, progress measures placed English, mathematics, languages and humanities in the top 20% of all schools nationally. Results for 2013 strongly suggest that progress measures will improve for science bringing it in line with other subjects.
- The achievement of students eligible for support through pupil premium funding is in line with all students in the school and well above the achievement of this group nationally over time. In 2012 there was no gap in attainment for those gaining five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics. Results for 2013 indicate a slight gap in attainment for eligible students in comparison with the whole cohort but attainment is well above the national average from the group.
- The school does not receive Year 7 catch-up funding for literacy and numeracy because students joining the school have above average literacy levels. Reading, writing and communication skills, through the literacy policy, are very well developed across the school. Outstanding examples of note taking and drafting were seen in English and science. The school focus on speaking and listening is well supported by staff and students and many excellent examples of presentations, collaborative group learning and discussion were observed. In an English lesson students compared the portrayal of different female characters and worked collaboratively to develop their own critical and evaluative language.
- The schools' commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity and tackling possible discrimination is seen in the excellent progress and achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs. This is in line with the progress of all students in the school. The intervention and support provided are very effective and a high proportion of these students continue into the sixth form.
- The school makes no significant use of early entry for GCSE examinations for whole groups or classes.
- There is an impressive range of artistic, performance, cultural, sporting and school community events organised through subjects and the house system. These enable students from all year groups to work together and have a hugely positive impact on achievement.
- Students' transition into the sixth form is very successful and their progress and achievement, including that of boys, is strong, particularly at AS level, where attainment has continued to rise consistently over time. Students are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education with established links with local and national universities.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Students' strong progress and achievement are the result of outstanding teaching across the school. Only rarely is teaching less than good. In the sixth form, well over half the teaching is outstanding. As a result, all groups of students make rapid progress.
- Teachers have high expectations and lessons are intellectually challenging and rigorous. They build on students' questions, comments and insights. Their input is well targeted, specific and striking, enabling students to take ownership of their own learning in working by themselves. One teacher described this as 'keeping the students on the edge of not understanding'.

- Planning is excellent. Activities are well sequenced, with good pace to engage students, meet their needs and promote learning and progress.
- Teachers question students very effectively. They use the information from questions to gauge understanding and reshape explanations to consolidate prior learning, deepen understanding and promote effective discussion. In a personal and social education lesson, students were discussing the use of drugs and whether they should be legalised. The teacher's effective explanations and questioning led to a high level of discussion on a complex social issue. Consequently, students are well prepared to tackle the moral issues they may face in the future.
- Reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills are well developed in lessons. Teachers model subject-specific language and also provide students with opportunities to develop their own language skills. In science students make excellent use of mini whiteboards for drafting answers and planning extended writing and demonstrated secure mathematical skills in analysing data and plotting graphs.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent. One student said, 'Teachers are so enthusiastic about their subjects.' In a mathematics lesson on dividing polynomials, the teacher used her good subject knowledge to explore various methods of division and link prior knowledge to new learning. As a consequence, students' progress was rapid.
- Work is marked regularly and provides useful feedback. High-quality marking clearly indicates what students need to do to improve. On a very few occasions, students are not consistently required to respond to the guidance given and opportunities for a dialogue about improving learning are not as well developed as they could be.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Staff and students together promote and maintain a thirst and love of learning across the school. This is reflected in students' attitudes in lessons, in independent study and homework, and in their aspirations for the future. They pose questions to each other and their teachers and take every opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning. This has a huge impact on their progress.
- Behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school because relationships are strong. Students show courtesy and good manners at all times.
- Students have a strong sense of ownership of the spaces in the school, corridors and form rooms. They feel very safe and comfortable and value the trust the school places in them at break and lunchtimes. They take responsibility for their own behaviour, look out for each other and know when to involve adults if required.
- Student attendance is above average overall and improving. The attendance of the small number of students eligible for the pupil premium is also improving in line with the cohort and the school is working hard with external agencies and families to close the attendance gap.
- The vast majority of responses to the parent and staff surveys were positive about students' behaviour and safety. All the parents and carers who spoke to the inspection team at the Year 7 parents' evening were delighted with how well their daughters had settled in. There were no reports of bullying, although one parent or carer said she had half expected it but it had not happened.
- Students know about bullying and what to do but say that it is very rare. Racist and homophobic bullying is almost unknown. Students understand how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- Strategies to improve behaviour have been successful and have led to a reduction in the number of exclusions, which were low and have reduced further.
- The level of care for individuals is very high. All staff know the students very well indeed and work together to ensure that support and intervention meet the needs of all students.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. In Year 7 project-based learning, students used current news resources to reflect on the impact of the typhoon in the Philippines and develop their spiritual, moral and cultural response to the

disaster.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and senior team have a strong sense of moral purpose and a clear vision for the direction of the school. They have successfully combined the best of traditional values and academic subjects with innovations in teaching and learning to ensure improved outcomes for students.
- The leadership and management of teaching are excellent. Monitoring of teaching and learning over time is detailed and rigorous and all aspects of the Teachers' Standards are effectively embedded in the lesson observation process.
- Teaching is supported by a comprehensive professional development programme. Activities are well linked to the school development plan and also meet individual identified needs in subject knowledge and career progression. Teachers value the flexibility of the programme and the range of opportunities, such as nationally accredited courses and visiting colleagues in other schools. Opportunities for sharing good practice are successful and valued; the lead practitioner provides good support to colleagues.
- Tracking of students' performance and assessment data is rigorous and their progress against targets is effectively monitored. Underachievement is identified and addressed quickly. Students know their targets and how well they are doing and maintain a dialogue with their teachers in reviewing these. GCSE students described this as 'the right amount of challenge'. One said, 'My target (in art) is an A despite me thinking I am a C grade.'
- Senior leaders have a track record of success in holding subject leaders to account for underperformance at GCSE and AS level and they are taking robust action in response to lower-than-expected A-level results in a few subjects. The school is demonstrating a strong capacity to improve further.
- Middle leadership is good and improving rapidly and much is outstanding. Middle leaders understand and support the firm focus on learning and understand how improving teaching contributes to raising achievement. They have worked successfully with their teams to improve the quality of teaching but a few are not as consistent as senior leaders in holding teachers in their areas to account for students' performance. Robust plans for further developing subject leadership are in place to ensure all is as good as the best.
- The school has worked hard since the last inspection to improve communication with parents and carers and develop their links with the school.
- Community partnerships are an outstanding aspect of school life. Parents and carers of primary-age students value the regular subject enrichment workshops for their children and the school has meaningful professional and student links with other Dover schools and universities in Kent. The creativity and success in fund raising for charity are a credit to the school and its students.
- Students are given clear and unbiased careers information to prepare them for education post-16 and working life.
- The local authority provides light touch support for the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body shows great commitment to the school. Governors are fully supportive of the vision and ethos and have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development. They are well informed and keep the school development plan under review. They have had training on target setting and the analysis and evaluation of performance data so that they are increasingly able to interrogate these for themselves. On a few occasions in the past they have not always challenged the school sufficiently robustly on the impact of actions on students' performance. This is no longer the case and improvements are being consolidated.
 - Governors understand how the quality of teaching relates to students' achievement and are actively involved in determining salary progression from the outcomes of performance management and the appraisal of the headteacher. Governors are determined to ensure equality of opportunity for all. They have strategic overview of the pupil premium funding and

keep its allocation and impact under review.

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	118806
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426685

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	837
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	229
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Diane Taylor
Headteacher	Matthew Bartlett
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2007
Telephone number	01304 206625
Fax number	01304 242400
Email address	enquiries@dggs.kent.sch.uk

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