

Dover Grammar School for Boys

Astor Avenue, Dover, Kent CT17 0DQ

Inspection dates	2–3 February 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The recently appointed headteacher is providing dynamic leadership focused on rapid but sustainable improvement in all areas of the school. The headteacher and the governing body have high aspirations for all pupils. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Outcomes in the school are now good. They have improved across a range of subjects, especially in mathematics. From favourable starting points, pupils' progress exceeds national averages.
- Teaching is good overall and is characterised by strong relationships, high expectations, effective planning and a brisk pace. New staff in key roles have swiftly secured improvements in teaching and learning.
- Pupils are courteous and friendly. They are very well cared for by the school and know how to lead safe and healthy lives. The school has a strong ethos of promoting equality and celebrating diversity. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength.
- Governors are committed to improving the school and have a clear understanding of what needs to be done. They provide determined support and challenge to the senior leaders.
- The sixth form is good. It offers a range of appropriate courses, taught within a safe, supportive and nurturing environment. Learners receive good careers advice and have high aspirations for higher education and future employment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small minority of pupils, especially those who enter the school with above-average attainment, do not make the same rapid and substantial progress as their lower- and middle-attaining peers.
- There are still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in subjects and across subjects.
- Teachers do not always follow the school's marking policy when providing feedback to help pupils make progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers have even higher expectations of what pupils, especially higher-attaining pupils, can do and can achieve
 - making certain that teachers adhere to the marking policy when providing feedback
 - sharing the outstanding practice that already exists to reduce variability in the quality of teaching within and across subjects and key stages.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The newly appointed headteacher has won the respect and confidence of staff, pupils and parents. She has a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses as evidenced in the school's accurate self-evaluation which was confirmed during the inspection. Strong appointments in key roles are beginning to have a positive impact on improving performance.
- Staff morale is high and a very large majority of staff who responded to the online staff survey said they were confident in the leadership and management of the school. Senior leaders are passionate about wanting the very best outcomes for all pupils. All parents who expressed an opinion praised the quality of leadership and management, and nearly all would recommend the school to other parents.
- Senior leaders monitor and evaluate the school's performance with increasing efficiency and effectiveness. They have developed a robust system for tracking pupils' academic performance, and progress information is forensically analysed. Senior leaders are securing consistently good teaching through effective and bespoke professional development.
- Middle managers meet regularly with senior leaders and welcome the challenge to improve teaching and outcomes. These middle managers, many relatively new in post, are bringing an energy to their roles which makes them an asset to the school. They like the fact that they have been empowered by the senior leaders but also recognise their accountability for pupils' progress.
- Leadership of teaching is strong. Rapid improvements in teaching have been brought about through increased professional collaboration, dialogue and planning, together with bespoke training and coaching to improve practice. Performance management has been strengthened and staff are much clearer about expectations.
- New marking and assessment systems have been introduced. Most teachers follow the school's policy and provide helpful feedback when telling pupils what they need to do to improve. This was seen in English and science lessons, where pupils were expected to reflect on and make corrections to their work. The school acknowledges that further work is needed to ensure consistency in the application and impact of the policy.
- The curriculum has similarly undergone a recent redesign, with pupils studying GCSEs or their equivalents starting in Year 9. The school has successfully used this change to review and rewrite plans for learning to ensure that pupils' progress is at the core of the curriculum. The curriculum in the sixth form offers a range of opportunities for learners to study both academic and vocational programmes, with high retention rates confirming the appropriateness of the courses on offer. Careers guidance ensures that pupils and learners are very well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a real strength and particularly well supported through assemblies, tutor time and religious education lessons. Pupils show respect and tolerance for people with different backgrounds and lifestyles, and can talk with maturity about related issues, for example, when discussing riots, the fragility of democracy and fundamental British values. Extra-curricular activities, competitive sports and school trips help them to develop their understanding of the wider community.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Care is taken to ensure that their needs are well understood and that both pupils and parents are involved in planning for their learning. Senior leaders and governors monitor the impact of pupil premium expenditure regularly. Examination results confirm that the gap between the performance of these pupils and others nationally is relatively small or else reducing.
- There is a strong working relationship between the school and the local authority, which has provided ongoing support for the development of leadership and governance as well as the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is good and the governing body undertakes its statutory responsibilities with increasing confidence. Governors provide the right balance of support and challenge. They talk confidently about what they have done in particular instances, such as in the school's drive to improve outcomes.
 - Governors are committed to their work with the school and make effective use of the information provided to identify areas of strength and weakness. Professional development has given them a clear insight into what governors themselves need to do to improve their effectiveness.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff are regularly trained in child protection and safeguarding. The school makes thorough checks on staff and these are recorded in line with current

requirements. The link governor for safeguarding provides strong and effective monitoring of the school's safeguarding arrangements. Key staff and governors are trained in safer recruiting. There is a clear culture of safety across the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is good as a result of leaders' determination to secure improvements and raise outcomes through monitoring, feedback and support. The school is working very hard to reduce variability through intensive professional development and the sharing of good and outstanding practice.
- Teaching has improved. It is strongest in English, mathematics and sports studies, where pupils' work demonstrates high levels of attainment and progress. For example, in a Year 10 sports studies lesson, pupils were challenged to provide definitions for health and for fitness to realise the difference.
- Teachers use questioning to good effect in the classroom to elicit responses and check understanding. The vast majority of pupils feel confident and are very eager to contribute their thoughts and ideas during lesson times. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive.
- Subject knowledge is a real strength, allowing teachers to plan lessons which are developmental and hierarchical. Many teachers are involved in marking external examinations and this gives them a useful understanding of examination requirements.
- The very large majority of parents are pleased with the quality of the teaching and most pupils agree that teachers are supportive and challenging and help them to understand. Pupils talk positively about the recent improvements in the quality of teaching.
- The quality of feedback is variable across the school and across departments. Many books show evidence of regular feedback explaining what needs to be done. However, a small minority of teachers do not follow through and check that feedback has been addressed so that progress is enhanced, as required by the marking policy.
- The promotion of literacy skills is strong, with sufficient attention given to subject-specific vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and grammar. Boys are encouraged to read widely and their oracy skills (their ability to express themselves fluently and grammatically in speech) are well developed across the school.
- Numeracy across the curriculum is supported but opportunities to promote the use of numeracy are not always seized upon.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are polite, respectful and caring to one another. They readily take responsibility for their learning and their attitudes are consistently positive. They enjoy learning and most arrive at lessons fully equipped and ready to learn. Pupils take pride in their work, listen carefully and confidently contribute to lessons.
- Pupils are well cared for by staff who work hard to ensure that they understand how to keep healthy, including physically, emotionally and mentally. Pastoral support staff provide high-quality additional assistance to pupils who are especially vulnerable for a range of reasons so that they are able to gain access to learning and make good progress similar to their peers.
- The extensive personal, social and health education programme covers a range of topics, so that pupils have a clear understanding of issues such as bullying, including cyber, racist and homophobic bullying. Most pupils say that they feel safe and well supported by the school. A very large majority of responding parents agreed.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful to each other, staff and visitors. They know the standard expected of them and they are loyal to and proud of their school. Pupils' attitudes to learning vary according to the quality of teaching they receive. This leads to some pupils not focusing sufficiently well on their studies and slows their progress.
- Pupils show a good level of respect towards each other. They are also respectful of the school environment and, as a result, the school site is mostly tidy and free from litter. Pupils confirm that behaviour seen during the inspection was typical of behaviour over time.

- In a small minority of lessons, not all of the pupils receive the challenge they need to maintain their interest or stretch their understanding. Where this happens, occasionally lessons can be disrupted by low-level chatter or off-task behaviour. Pupils say that this is rare and say that staff usually manage it well.
- Attendance rates are above national averages but not so good in the sixth form. Persistent absences are decreasing and punctuality to the school and to lessons is good.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Attainment is high and GCSE results were the best for a number of years with 93% of pupils gaining five good grades at GCSE. Individual subjects fare well in terms of A* to C grades but the proportion of the higher A* to A grades is not high enough given pupils' attainment on entry. Pupils attained significantly above national averages in all of the English Baccalaureate subjects except in languages, where performance was similar to the national average.
- Measured in terms of pupils' progress, the GCSE results in 2015 continued the upward trend in examination performance, especially in mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils making and exceeding the expected progress in 2015 was well above national averages in English and mathematics. Pupils' progress in the English Baccalaureate subjects was similar to national averages except in languages, where performance was below the national average.
- In the 2015 GCSE examinations, disadvantaged pupils performed marginally better than their peers and significantly higher than pupils nationally. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils making and exceeding the expected progress in English and mathematics was also better than their peers and significantly higher than pupils nationally.
- The progress of the small numbers of pupils with special educational needs was similar to national averages. The progress of lower and middle attainers was significantly above national averages, whereas the progress of higher attainers was in line with national averages so that these pupils were not progressing as well in relation to their peers.
- Key Stage 3 information suggests that the majority of pupils are meeting and exceeding expected progress in all years. In the sixth form, the 2015 examination results were not so high as 2014 but progress was still similar to national averages. Art, film studies and information technology were particularly successful subjects in the sixth form, whereas English and history were less successful.
- Lesson observations, book scrutinies and school assessment information suggest that the results in 2016 will show further improvements. Lesson observations and work scrutinies confirm that higher-attaining pupils are now making good progress and that progress is improving in languages. Disadvantaged pupils continue to do as well as their peers because of the acknowledgement, support and encouragement which they receive.
- Pupils read widely in tutor time and outside lessons. A high profile is given to the importance of reading. The work of the school, as well as the determination of the school's librarian, has stimulated a strong interest in reading for pleasure. In lessons, pupils read with confidence and fluency. Catch-up programmes are available for any pupils who are falling behind.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The leadership and management of the sixth form are strong but relatively new so that opportunities to demonstrate impact on the achievement of learners are presently limited. Recent improvements, initiated by the new leadership, include careful monitoring, rigorous tracking, early intervention and individual learning plans.
- The curriculum in the sixth form is broad, balanced and carefully personalised for learners, including academic and vocational courses. Curriculum pathways and career routes are very well supported by good-quality information, advice and guidance. Retention rates from Year 12 to Year 13 are very high. Support for learners' literacy and mathematical skills was evident across a range of lessons.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers' strong relationships, subject knowledge and critical understanding of examination requirements are real strengths of the provision. Teachers assess work accurately and use their subject and examination awareness to support learners to meet their targets and fulfil their aspirations.

- Learners in the sixth form are punctual to lessons and their attendance is now improving as a result of recent efforts. Learners contribute well to the life of the school, acting as good role models and supporting pupils in the main school. Sixth formers experience a carefully constructed tutor programme that ensures that everyone is well informed about equality and diversity as well as other aspects of fundamental British values.
- Outcomes in the sixth form are good. In 2015, A-level and vocational results were similar to national averages. Attainment on entry to the sixth form was not as favourable as national figures because the 2013 GCSE results were not as high. As a result, progress is good, and this is confirmed by lesson observations and work scrutinies. All learners proceed to some form of higher education, training, employment or self-employment. Increasing proportions of learners are pursuing university places at highly regarded universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.
- The sixth form fully meets the current standards for 16 to 19 study programmes.

School details

Unique reference number	118931
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10002363

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	792
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Les Craggs
Headteacher	Fiona Chapman
Telephone number	01304 206117
Website	www.dovergramboys.kent.sch.uk
Email address	office@dovergramboys.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 October 2013

Information about this school

- Dover Grammar School for Boys is a below-average-sized single sex boys' grammar school, although girls are admitted into the sixth form. The headteacher was appointed in 2014 following the last inspection, which judged the school to require improvement.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with smaller numbers of any other White background and any other Asian background. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average and the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is well below the national average. This funding is for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children.
- There were no pupils eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding for those who did not attain Level 4 in either English or mathematics at the end of primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well below the national average. There are no pupils who are educated elsewhere.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook observations of pupils' learning in 38 lessons, including four observations which were jointly undertaken with senior members of staff. Inspectors reviewed the work in pupils' books, including English, mathematics and science, in order to check outcomes and assessment.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and middle managers. The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors met with pupils from all key stages and informal discussions took place during lessons and breaktimes.
- Inspectors looked at the school's website and various documentation, including safeguarding documentation, self-evaluation and development plans. They also looked at the school's records for attendance, behaviour and exclusions.
- Inspectors considered the views of 127 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the accompanying written comments. Inspectors also reviewed 44 questionnaires completed by members of staff and 52 completed by pupils.

Inspection team

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