

Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys

St John's Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN4 9XB

Inspection dates 10–11 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has developed well since its last inspection. Examination results have improved steadily and students achieved the school's best ever results in 2012.
- The sixth form is good. Students' high GCSE attainment and above-average A-level results prepare them well for the future. Most students transfer to the sixth form and move on to university courses of their choice.
- Students' behaviour is excellent, shown in high levels of concentration in lessons and in the way they take responsibility for their own learning. They are proud of their school and feel safe and secure within it.
- Leadership and management, including that of the governing body, are good. The headteacher has high aspirations to raise students' achievement further and this is shared by staff and students.
- The management of teachers' work is effectively improving teaching quality. Teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. Students appreciate that teachers are always ready to give extra help.
- Students follow a broad curriculum and the impressive range of lunchtime clubs enables them to stretch their skills and knowledge further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is scope to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching to enable students to make even more rapid progress in lessons.
- Department leaders are still developing their confidence in using progress data from students to plan for improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 46 lessons, some jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with groups of staff and students, and discussions took place with the Chair of the Governing Body, other representative governors and a local authority officer.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, attended assemblies and scrutinised students' work, progress data, development and evaluation documents, safeguarding information, records relating to behaviour and attendance, the impact of professional development on the school's performance and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors took account of 213 parents' and carers' responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as questionnaires completed by 26 staff.

Inspection team

Helen Hutchings, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Roger Fenwick	Additional inspector
Babrul Matin	Additional inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional inspector
Carolyn Steer	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys is an above-average-sized selective secondary school.
- The school admits girls into its sixth form, and has collaborative arrangements with other secondary schools locally to broaden sixth form curriculum provision.
- Most students are of White British heritage, with a number of other backgrounds represented in low numbers, and very few speak English as an additional language.
- Although very few students are eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government), this has increased since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of students with disabilities and those who are supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is low.
- A very few students attend alternative provision on courses at other institutions.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school holds specialist status for humanities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, so that students make even more rapid progress, by making sure that all teachers:
 - plan lessons that take account of the starting points of all students in the group so that the introductions to lessons are neither too hard nor too easy
 - use the school marking policy consistently to give students regular feedback about how to improve their work
 - use questioning to give more challenge to students' thinking, particularly for the most able.
- Use the existing expertise within the school to develop more consistent departmental leadership so that all heads of department use tracking data effectively in their planning for development.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' attainment is higher than average when they join the school. Students build well on these foundations and make good progress throughout the school so that GCSE and A-level results are consistently and significantly above national averages.
- Almost all students study and achieve well in the English Baccalaureate range of subjects, which is significantly broader than that found nationally. Progress is particularly strong in the humanities subjects, the school's specialism. Attainment is relatively even across all subjects. The school took prompt action to address a fall in results in information and communication technology last year, and students are again working at above-average levels.
- Last year students made more progress than students nationally, and achieved a 20% increase in the proportion achieving GCSE A*/A grades over the previous year. The school's tracking information shows that students across the school are continuing to work at these higher levels. The school is well placed to continue to improve results further because it has accurately identified and is addressing areas where students are capable of even stronger achievement.
- Students take an above-average number of GCSE subjects. To make their overall programme manageable, the school fast tracks students to enter their first GCSE science examinations in Year 10 and gain additional science qualifications in Year 11.
- While there is more variation in attainment and progress at A level from year to year, the overall trend is one of improvement across a broad and challenging curriculum. Most students include general studies as an additional A level, and some choose to add an extended project to their core studies, giving them a firm foundation for further study.
- Students read very well, regularly reading for pleasure, information and research. Recognising that students join the school with stronger numeracy than literacy skills, the school has increased the range of books for students in Key Stage 3. Consequently, students quickly develop analytical skills which support their independent learning.
- Highly effective identification of students who have lower literacy levels or who have special educational needs is used to plan programmes of support, such as additional programmes which are rapidly improving reading, writing and spelling skills. Numbers are low, but students who are identified at school action, school action plus or who hold a statement of special educational needs generally make overall progress similar to others in the year group, and their attainment is significantly above that found nationally.
- The school uses the additional funding received through the student premium effectively to support those who are known to be eligible. Consequently, the overall average points score is similar to that of their peers.
- Occasionally, the school uses alternative provision for a few students who are experiencing academic or emotional difficulties. The careful choice of provision ensures that no-one 'falls through the net' and that all students undertake further study or enter employment on leaving school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about teaching in the school. Students find teachers approachable and helpful, and are appreciative of the additional time that teachers give them if there is anything they do not understand.
- Teachers know their students well and develop positive relationships with them so that lessons are purposeful. In the best, teachers successfully promote a sense of excitement about learning. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, when the teacher suggested a particularly challenging problem about converting units of measurement, a student exclaimed, 'Yes, let's go for it!'
- Students are serious about their learning, willingly completing homework because they know that it helps their knowledge and understanding. In lessons, they begin the initial tasks set for

them as a matter of routine, without the need for reference to the teacher.

- Much has been achieved since the last inspection to address relative weaknesses identified at that time. Teachers have high expectations that students should be independent learners and give time for individual consolidation and practice of new concepts. Similarly, students have opportunities to work in groups to share ideas and articulate their thinking.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to present work in a way which interests and challenges students to think issues through for themselves. This was seen to good effect in an A-level design and technology lesson where students used their mathematics and physics knowledge to establish control systems, for example, to limit the time young people can play computer games. This is only one example of many where teachers facilitate learning by requiring students to carry out their own background research.
- Teachers guide students well, often through challenging individual conversations and through the many 'surgery' sessions. Marking is exceptionally supportive in the sixth form, but there are a few instances, particularly in Key Stage 3, where marking does not provide sufficient comment about how to improve work or require students to follow up suggestions for improvement. Nevertheless, students have a good understanding of the quality of their work because of regular assessments and discussions with their form tutors or mentors about what they have to do next.
- Much teaching is whole-class based, so that on occasion, some time is lost going over work which some have already mastered while others are experiencing difficulty. Similarly, while teachers' questioning is challenging for most students in the class, it sometimes places a ceiling on the extent to which the highest-attaining students broaden their thinking.
- Teachers have a good awareness of how to promote literacy in other subjects because it is a current area of development. This is particularly effective in humanities, while other subjects give close attention to the accurate use of subject-specific technical language.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students and their parents are proud to be part of the school community. Attendance levels are high, indicating students' enjoyment of school. They speak highly of the school and actively support its open and inclusive character.
- Around the school, students are very considerate of one another and the environment. The house system develops a strong sense of 'family' and house events ensure that all become involved in activities beyond lessons. Consequently, all groups of students get on very well together.
- Temporary exclusion is rare and there have not been any permanent exclusions in recent years.
- Students' outstandingly positive attitudes in the classroom underpin their high attainment. Their readiness for learning and their punctuality to lessons are exemplary.
- In lessons, students' behaviour is exemplified by the responsibility they take for their own learning, ensuring that they have developed independent learning skills which equip them well for further study after they leave school. As a result of positive and supportive relationships, students are confident to raise questions when there is something they do not understand, knowing that their concerns are taken seriously by teachers and fellow students.
- Students feel safe and say that bullying does not happen. They know how to keep themselves safe, for example around the site, with shared access to the leisure centre or when online. Safety about a broad range of topics is discussed openly and regularly within personal development lessons. Older students, such as house leaders, play an important role, for example, drawing attention to the school's procedures to report bullying and find help when needed through the student-led anti-bullying programme.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders and governors communicate high expectations to staff and students, and use their accurate view of the school's performance effectively to plan for the future and set increasingly challenging targets.
 - Improving the quality of teaching to outstanding is a key priority and the action taken to date is having a positive impact. Teachers are positive about the new 'teacher–learner communities' which give them opportunities to explore initiatives and share best practice.
 - Arrangements for teachers' performance management are rigorous and closely linked to salary progression. Teachers see these procedures to be fair and just, and the programme of professional development relevant and supportive.
 - Since the previous inspection, the monitoring of students' performance has been strengthened. The system provides leaders with clear information which they use well to change approaches, for example, to arrange additional mentoring for students who are finding it challenging to meet their targets. However, some heads of department are not fully confident in using this information to guide the work of their teams and to focus change where it will make the greatest difference.
 - The curriculum offers impressive opportunities to study a very broad range of academic subjects, including subjects such as geology, not routinely offered in many schools, so that the interests of students are met exceptionally well. Sixth-form study is further enriched through access to courses at other schools locally which the school alone could not provide.
 - Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well through the extensive range of enrichment activities, including overseas trips and international exchange visits, participation in national competitions, and educational visits such as regular field trips reflecting the school's specialist status. Students show a strong awareness of others, organising activities to fundraise for the head boy's annual charity.
 - Those students entitled to pupil premium funding have benefited from individually tailored provision, including access to counselling services, purchases of equipment for college courses, and literacy resources.
 - The local authority provides effective light-touch support, such as through a teaching review to underpin the school's self-evaluation.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Recent changes within the governing body have ensured that a wide range of complementary skills are brought to governance. Governors are passionate about the school and realistic in their thinking and planning. New procedures have been introduced to make sure that individual governors have opportunities to understand the school's work in more detail than previously. The governing body has a good understanding of data and the school's strengths and knows how the school compares with other schools. They hold the headteacher and senior leaders to account in a rigorous and challenging way. Governors have an accurate knowledge about performance management and the quality of teaching and the steps being taken to bring about further improvement. The allocation of funding is based on a clear analysis of potential impact on student outcomes, for example in the allocation of pupil premium funding. Systems for safeguarding students and staff are managed meticulously and checked regularly.
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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	118790
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	403366

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	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,283
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	295
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Beverley Lawrence
Headteacher	John Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	30 April–1 May 2008
Telephone number	01892 529551
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