

Mayfield Grammar School, Gravesend

Pelham Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 0JE

Inspection dates 11–12 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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.

- Staff and school leaders share the headteacher's uncompromising vision for the school that promotes the learning and progress of every student within a caring and cohesive community. As a result, achievement in all subjects including English and mathematics is exceptionally high. Leaders know the school well and what needs to be done to improve still further.
- Teachers enjoy their teaching, are committed to their training and development and work hard to ensure that what they provide in the classroom helps students to flourish. As a consequence, much teaching is outstanding.
- The behaviour of students is exemplary. They engage enthusiastically with their learning, are courteous, polite and keen to contribute fully to the life of the school.
- The leadership of teaching is exceptionally strong. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching on a regular basis and ensure that staff training is tailored to the individual needs of the teacher. Performance management is robust and of the highest quality. As a result, teaching is continuing to improve over time.
- The school provides students with a varied and responsive curriculum. This includes a rich diet of extra-curricular activities which students participate in enthusiastically and which helps them to develop both socially and culturally.
- The teaching of literacy is particularly effective. Students are encouraged to read widely and to use a precise, technical vocabulary. This enables them to develop complex skills such as evaluation and analysis and these support them in their future learning.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Teaching is exceptionally strong and, as a result, students make excellent progress.
- Members of the governing body are ambitious for the school's success and use their wide-ranging skills to provide very effective challenge and support for school leaders.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 39 lessons, in addition to making shorter visits to a number of classrooms. A number of these observations were made jointly with school leaders. They also looked at the quality of teachers' marking and how this was helping students to improve.
- Inspectors met with three groups of students to discuss their experience of school, and particularly their learning, behaviour and safety. They also spoke to students informally at lunch and break times and in lessons.
- The lead inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors also met with a number of groups of school leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed a number of documents including: the governing body minutes; safeguarding procedures; behaviour and attendance records; documents relating to school self-review and improvement; and school records on performance management and teaching, including records of lesson observations.
- The lead inspector worked with the headteacher and members of her leadership team to analyse the school's data on students' current progress, including those supported through the pupil premium, those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, inspectors took account of 87 responses to the Parent View survey and 59 questionnaires completed by members of staff.

Inspection team

Graham Tuck, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Patricia MacLachlan	Additional Inspector
Alastair McMeckan	Additional Inspector
Angela Podmore	Additional Inspector
Jason Wye	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-size secondary school with 256 students in the sixth form.
- The school selects from the top 25% of girls.
- It converted to become an academy in February, 2012. When its predecessor school, Gravesend Grammar School for Girls, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- The school has a specialism in science and a second specialism in languages.
- Approximately one in 20 of the school's population is known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided for children in local authority care, children of service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals. This proportion is well below the national average. There are no children from service families currently on the school's roll.
- There are no Year 7 students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium, which is provided by the government to support those students who have not previously reached the expected levels in English and mathematics.
- A little under one in three students is from a minority ethnic group, which is above the national average.
- A little under one in five students speaks English as an additional language which is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average.
- Some additional A-level courses are taken by sixth form students at Saint George's Church of England School, Northfleet School for Girls, Northfleet Technology College, Gravesend Grammar School and St John's Catholic Comprehensive School.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the school's outstanding quality of teaching by developing the skills of all teachers to:
 - use questioning to check students' learning and progress during lessons and to adjust activities when appropriate
 - plan lessons so that all students are given the maximum opportunity to work together in class and to learn from each other.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students join the school with levels of attainment that are well above the national average. They make excellent progress in all of their subjects so that by the end of Year 11 levels of attainment are exceptionally high. For example, in 2012 almost half the grades awarded at GCSE were at A and A*. In English and mathematics progress is much higher than national rates and, as a result, the percentage attaining the top grades is almost three times the national average in English and over two and a half times in mathematics. Based on the school's reliable data, achievement is set to rise still further this year with almost 60% of grades projected to be awarded at A and A*.
- The small number of students supported by the pupil premium make outstanding progress. In 2012 they attained at a third of a grade lower than all other students in English and a third of a grade above in mathematics. However, their rates of progress are higher than those for all other students in the school and significantly above those for similar students nationally. As a result, any gaps in attainment between these students and the attainment of others are narrowing rapidly. The very effective targeting of pupil premium money, for example in providing additional support for reading and writing, has contributed significantly to this success.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make excellent progress. This is due to high levels of care and support and astute planning by teachers.
- Students from minority ethnic groups, including those with English as an additional language, make excellent progress and as a result their standards of attainment are high.
- This year for the first time, more-able students have taken their GCSE mathematics at the end of Year 10. This is so that they can move on to advanced level studies in year 11. The school uses this system to deepen their understanding of mathematics and to prepare them for advanced level studies. Care is taken by the school to ensure that students continue with the subject until they achieve the grade that is expected of them.
- Throughout the school, students are encouraged to read widely and often, and the well-resourced library is a busy and bustling place at all times of the school day. Opportunities are taken through national, local and school-run competitions to extend and develop students' reading for pleasure. Reading for research purposes is encouraged across the curriculum and subject teachers take on the responsibility for teaching specific skills, such as scanning a difficult piece of writing for its meaning and purpose. As a consequence, progress in literacy across the school is exceptional.
- As a result of outstanding teaching that encourages students to work independently and with each other, students, including those who attend other settings for part of their studies, make excellent progress in the sixth form and are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education. Almost all the parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey agree that their child makes good progress in the school: almost half strongly agree that this is the case.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The excellent relationship between students and their teachers is a striking feature of the school and helps to ensure that all lessons take place in an atmosphere of mutual courtesy and respect. Teachers know their subject well and share this knowledge enthusiastically with the students.
- Teachers plan their lessons carefully and use the information they have about students' achievement to create challenging work that builds on what they already know and understand. In the vast majority of lessons, questioning is used skilfully to assess the students' progress and to make timely adjustments to their learning. However, in a very few lessons questioning is too closed, not deepening students' understanding and this limits the students' progress.

- Students work well together and thrive in situations where they can talk to each other about their learning. For example, in an outstanding Year 10 French lesson, students worked in pairs translating phrases about holidays. They challenged each other's answers and in doing so were able to attain exceptionally high standards. In a Year 12 English lesson, pairs of students explored complex questions about different styles of writing and then shared their ideas with others. Timely interventions and the reshaping of activities by the teacher meant that the progress made by the students was exceptional. On the rare occasions where teaching was less effective, opportunities for students to engage in collaborative learning were more limited.
- In their marking of students' work, teachers are extremely thorough in providing students with written support and encouragement and this often has a notable impact on their learning. For example, in a Year 8 art lesson, students were able to hone their drawing skills in response to the teacher's thoughtful and perceptive comments.
- All teachers have taken on a responsibility for the teaching of literacy. As a result, students are exceptionally confident in their use of technical language and use this to explore complex ideas. For example, in a Year 8 music lesson students were able to use a rich vocabulary in their analysis of a piece from Holst's *'The Planets'* and then apply this analysis to their own compositions.
- Homework is set regularly and is used very effectively to develop students' understanding of a subject and to extend their thinking. Almost all parents and carers agree that their child receives appropriate homework for their age.
- Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. Students agree that they are fully involved in their learning and that they are supported and encouraged to become highly effective independent learners. For example, in government and politics students are provided with a safe 'online feed' so that they can access current blogs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students are proud of their school and this is reflected in how they wear their uniform and their welcoming and courteous treatment of visitors. They demonstrate impeccable behaviour when moving to and from lessons and in their breaks and lunchtimes. Teachers provide students with outstanding role models and staff are unanimous that behaviour is a strength of the school.
- Students display exemplary attitudes to their school work, arriving at lessons on time and keen to achieve and succeed. They take every opportunity to be involved in class and whole-school activities. As a result, they are extremely accomplished in supporting their own and each other's learning.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and carers agree that students behave well at the school and are happy and safe. Students say that they feel safe and that bullying is very rare and, if it does occur, is dealt with rapidly and effectively by the school. They have a clear understanding of the different types of bullying and an excellent knowledge of potential hazards, including the risks of internet use and cyber bullying. To support this, there is an e-safety representative in every class.
- Each key stage has its own council and students recognise that through this they have a genuine voice in the running of the school. Students appreciate the opportunities they have to interact with other year groups, for example through the school's mentoring system or student-run charity events. In the sixth form, elected 'senior officials' are involved in supporting younger students, presenting in whole-school assemblies and organising events such as a pensioners' tea party.
- The students' positive attitudes to school are reflected in the fact that there are no exclusions and attendance is well above the national average.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's outstanding leadership, which puts the learning and progress of all at the heart of the day-to-day life of the school, has helped to create a school where all students flourish both academically and socially. Excellent monitoring systems are in place to track the progress of students, and teachers and school leaders are quick to provide any additional support that a student might need to help them progress. Leaders model the qualities of openness and honesty, courtesy and respect, and this is reflected in the day-to-day work of the school and particularly the exemplary behaviour of the students and their attitudes to learning.
- Leaders know the school well: their self-evaluation is robust and from this they are able to identify areas for further improvement. These are set out in a clear, well-structured and appropriately ambitious school development plan. Staff morale is exceptionally high as demonstrated in the overwhelmingly positive response in staff questionnaires.
- A relentless focus on teaching has meant that there is much teaching that is outstanding. Teachers are fully committed to their training and development and this is reflected in their excellent classroom practice. Subject leaders regularly observe lessons and their judgements on the quality of teaching in the school and what needs to be done to make it better are accurate and astute. Staff performance is managed very well and pay rises are closely linked to the targets set for teachers and the progress of the students that they teach.
- The school provides very positive information and advice about joining the sixth form and carefully tailors courses to the individual's needs. The school's offer is enhanced through collaboration with other local sixth form providers.
- The school's curriculum, which is very well matched to students' interests and abilities, makes a significant contribution to the school's high levels of achievement. For example, opportunities are provided for students to begin their GCSE and A-level studies a year early so that they can explore subjects in greater depth. Important topics, such as disability and animal cruelty, are studied through personal and social education and these help to support the students' spiritual and moral development. The leadership of literacy is exceptionally strong and has made a significant impact on the quality of learning throughout the school.
- Students' cultural development is exceptionally well catered for through a wide range of activities including drama productions, school choirs and theatre visits. Each year group has the opportunity to take part in a trip abroad and school sports include rugby, rowing and fencing. Participation rates for all activities are high.
- The school is an exceptionally harmonious community. There is a strong commitment by leaders at all levels to promote equality of opportunity, positive relationships and ensure there is no discrimination.
- Safeguarding arrangements, including those for students who attend some off-site provision, are thorough and meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body make a highly effective contribution to the overall leadership of the school. They are knowledgeable, offer appropriate challenge and support, and recognise how important it is to develop their own skills. For example, training on school achievement data has enabled governors to ask challenging questions about the school's academic performance. From this, they have developed an excellent understanding of how well the school is performing compared with other similar schools. Through their committee structures, their scrutiny of regular reports, their oversight of performance management and their frequent school visits they understand the quality of teaching in the school and this enables them to make informed decisions about teachers' salary progression. Governors have an excellent oversight of school finances and hold leaders to account for the impact of pupil premium spending on the progress of students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care. Governors ensure that safeguarding and child protection procedures meet statutory requirements.

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	137834
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	403716

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Non-maintained
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	979
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	256
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Valerie Green
Headteacher	Elaine Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01474 352896
Fax number	01474 331195
Email address	enquiries@msg.kent.sch.uk

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