

Dover Grammar School for Boys

Astor avenue, Dover, Kent, CT17 0DQ

Inspection dates 15–16 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Over the last three years, the school has largely ironed out the unevenness in subject attainment, but students are capable of making faster progress in mathematics.
- Although the majority of teaching is good or better, there is still some across the school which requires improvement, especially in mathematics.
- Sometimes work in lessons is not challenging enough for students and the pace is too slow.
- Teachers' marking is inconsistent in checking on students' understanding and improving their presentation skills.
- The school's plans to disseminate best teaching practices across departments and involve students in giving their views about the most effective approaches have not yet been fully implemented.
- Students are not given enough opportunities to apply and consolidate their mathematics skills in other subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- The sixth form is good. Students' achievement has improved well over the last three years and is now good. This is the result of the stronger monitoring and support which address any difficulties students may have promptly.
- Students enjoy school as shown in their above average attendance. They take responsibility for their own learning, behave well and are considerate of others' views and opinions.
- The school's strong promotion of reading is reflected in consistently excellent English results.
- Performance in humanities subjects is consistently good, and science results improved last year.
- School leaders, including governors, have a clear understanding of the weaker areas in the school and are tackling these robustly so that the school is improving steadily.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons, some of which were joint observations with members of the senior leadership group.
- Meetings were held with three student groups including a sixth form group, school leaders and staff, as well as with representatives of the governing body and local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and attended an assembly. They scrutinised students' work, progress data, evaluation and development documents, information about how the school cares for and protects students and staff, and records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- The inspection team took account of 91 responses to the online Parent View survey submitted prior to and during the inspection, together with questionnaires completed by 23 staff.

Inspection team

Helen Hutchings, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Roger Garrett

Additional Inspector

Angela Podmore

Additional Inspector

Andrew Saunders

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Dover Grammar School for Boys is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. It is a selective boys' school which admits girls into the sixth form. Most boys have passed the Kent Selective Test.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- 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, those who are looked after by the local authority and children of service families) is low when compared with schools nationally.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is well below that found in most schools. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is 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.
- The school does not receive any Year 7 or 8 catch-up premium funding.
- There have been significant changes within the senior leadership group since the previous inspection, including the headteacher who has been in post for three years.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of good and better teaching across the school, and particularly in mathematics, so that students' progress becomes good overall, by:
 - ensuring that work is always set at the right level and lessons are conducted at a faster pace
 - promoting mathematics more effectively in other subjects to consolidate learning in other contexts
 - making sure that the school's expectations for marking and assessment are consistently implemented and that students are more often required to respond to their teachers' advice
 - setting higher expectations and giving more guidance to students about the presentation of their work
 - using the most effective practitioners to share best practice more widely across the school and implementing the plan to involve students in identifying how they learn best.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' achievement overall requires improvement because the strong achievement in most subjects is not matched by that in mathematics. Over a number of years, students' progress has been variable in mathematics and there has been a marginal decline in GCSE results. Students, including higher-attainers, are capable of making faster progress, for example, as they do in English. Students do not have enough opportunities to develop their mathematics skills in other subjects and contexts.
- Most students join the school with attainment which is above the national average. The percentage of students attaining five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics has increased over the last three years so that few finish Year 11 without this qualification. The proportion gaining the highest A*/A grades increased significantly last year, reflecting the greater emphasis on meeting the needs of the most able.
- Students achieve consistently high standards in English and humanities subjects. In line with improvements in most other subjects, attainment in science increased last year. This was the result of the strategy to increase the depth of study in students' programmes by reducing the previously high number of GCSE courses taken so that courses were more closely matched to students' needs. Each year an increasing number of students in Key Stage 4 follow a broadly balanced programme which leads to more gaining qualifications across the English Baccalaureate combination of subjects.
- Achievement is good in the sixth form. Since the previous inspection, students' attainment has improved steadily, particularly for the proportion of students achieving the higher grades. Attainment at AS and A level is in line with the national average, which represents good progress from students' starting points in Year 12.
- The gap between the attainment of students supported through the pupil premium and their peers is narrowing. In 2012, the latest year for which comparative data is available nationally, there was a difference of just over half a GCSE grade in both English and mathematics, where the gap nationally was over a grade. In 2013, the gap reduced to a quarter of a grade in English and a third in mathematics because need is identified and support given to meet individual circumstances.
- Disabled students or those who have special educational needs are well-known by teachers because of the detailed information they are given and they use this well to ensure that they are given appropriate support in lessons. As a result, students achieve in line with their peers. Care is taken to ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted; for example, in how students are supported sensitively on transition into Year 7 and into their chosen routes after school, and that effective communication is established with parents.
- Students thoroughly enjoy reading for pleasure, and to support their learning. Students are given good support in accessing and choosing books in the well-stocked library, which makes a strong contribution to preparation for study beyond school. The development of literacy is promoted well across the curriculum, but there has not been a similar approach to fostering and applying mathematical skills effectively in other subjects.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has changed its policy of entering students early for GCSE examinations. This has had a positive impact on the proportions reaching the higher grades as they have followed their GCSE courses for a full two years.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although there is some good or better teaching in most subjects, it is not good overall because it is inconsistent across the school. Teaching requires improvement in mathematics where the staff team is new and the support given has not yet had time to bring teaching into line with the better teaching across most of the school. On occasions, particularly in mathematics,

explanations are not clear and the pace of learning slows when students are not able to complete their independent work without additional help. Sometimes teachers underestimate what students already know so that time is wasted in tasks when students have already mastered the skill or knowledge and do not need further consolidation. In a few lessons, teachers' questioning is not sufficiently probing.

- The school's marking and assessment policy is not consistently implemented by all teachers and expectations for presentation are not always high enough. Some marking does not check students' misunderstandings sufficiently in their everyday work to ensure that their notes are accurate enough for later revision. While teachers give good guidance on how work could be improved, they do not routinely offer opportunities for students to test out this advice immediately by applying this to additional tasks or checking that the weakness has been addressed in subsequent work.
- Teaching is consistently strong in English, humanities and physical education and overall quality is better in the sixth form than in the main school. Students appreciate very much the support they get from their teachers and the interesting way learning is presented. However, the residual inconsistencies show that there is potential for the best practice to be shared more widely.
- In the large majority of lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge and high expectations of what students can achieve to challenge students and make learning stimulating. They assess accurately what students already know and build lesson activities to take learning forward quickly. For example, in a Year 7 history lesson, students made rapid progress because the teacher set tight deadlines and established a sense of urgency; students engaged enthusiastically with the task and gave perceptive views on what made the Roman army so powerful. Significant intellectual challenge was added when students also considered moral issues around the role of soldiers and the army.
- The school runs a comprehensive programme of revision lessons which are well-regarded by students who value the confidence this gives for them to succeed in examinations.
- The school's planning to improve teaching further includes an initiative to involve students more in sharing their views about how they learn best.
- Teaching is more consistently good and better in the sixth form than in the main school. At this level, teachers often use discussion and group work particularly well so that students research information and learn by sharing and debating their findings.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Relationships and mutual support are strong in the school because they are constantly fostered and reinforced. Students are well-mannered and considerate to one another, staff and visitors.
- Students get on well together, so that behaviour is good out of lessons and students feel safe, knowing good relationships are promoted and that any form of discrimination is not tolerated. Younger students report that bullying is extremely rare and, although older students say that incidents occur occasionally, these are dealt with well when reported to staff. Students understand different types of bullying, including cyber, racist and homophobic behaviour, and are mostly confident about how to deal with such situations. The already low number of incidents has declined further over the last three years.
- The success of the school's behaviour management system is shown in a reducing number of sanctions and an increase in the number of merits awarded. Exclusion is rare.
- Students are positive about their school work. They are keen to do well and collaborate sensibly in small groups to share opinions, so deepening their understanding. They respond well to tracking their own progress using their subject trackers, which helps to raise their aspirations and boosts their confidence as they see their grades improve.
- Students readily participate in a very wide range of extra-curricular activities and social and cultural events. During the inspection, they showed their commitment to school when following a late return home, the overwhelming majority were punctual to school in the morning after their

trip to an international football match.

- Attendance has continued to improve over the last three years and is consistently above average.

The leadership and management are good

- Staff are clear about their role in the school's journey of improvement. The senior leadership group gives a strong strategic lead to researching and introducing initiatives in a way which enables improvement to become deeply embedded in school practice. For example, improvement in sixth form leadership has led to more rigorous tracking of students' progress, and follow up support and intervention have resulted in improved achievement.
- Senior leaders and governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and are robust in tackling areas of less effective performance and are effectively bringing about improvement. Middle leaders check performance in their areas and use the information well to focus development where it is most needed. This shows the school's capacity for further improvement.
- Senior leaders have used their observation of inconsistent practice in departmental reviews to bring a more coherent approach to teaching and learning across the school. As a result of clearly established expectations, inadequate teaching has been eradicated. The school's records show that the proportion of good and outstanding teaching is steadily increasing. Staff are positive about the training programme and opportunities for sharing ideas and researching good practice, although the most effective practitioners have capacity to give more direct support to colleagues needing further help.
- The curriculum is well adapted to meet the aspirations and interests of students, while developing their independence and raising their achievement. During the inspection, Year 7 students benefited from a mobile planetarium visit which effectively promoted their spiritual development while linking to science study. Students have a broad range of experiences, preparing them well for the next stage of learning for life in the wider world.
- The curriculum contains initiatives to further challenge students, for example, the teaching of history and geography through French for some Years 8 and 9 students. Throughout the main school and in the sixth form, the academic curriculum is enriched by a programme promoting students' personal skills, including enterprise activities derived from the school's specialist status, financial awareness, radio and film making, music, art, architecture and good quality careers guidance.
- The local authority has provided light-touch support for the school. Leaders and governors have commissioned external evaluations to support and check its self-evaluation and to provide support targeted to weaker areas of performance, thereby bringing about improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is effectively challenging the school. Governors keep themselves up to date and are well informed about the school's work through the incisive work of governor committees, particularly in understanding how the school performs in relation to similar schools nationally and asking key questions of senior leaders. They set a clear strategic brief for the headteacher on his arrival to focus on sixth form performance because they recognised that, as most students stay into the sixth form, the slower progress in that phase was reducing the impact of students' experiences throughout the whole of their school career.
 - Governors know about the quality of teaching and performance management, and have ensured that teachers' pay awards are dependent on effective performance over time. They are aware of where underperformance has been tackled and support that has been provided. They keep a check that the pupil premium funding is having the planned impact. Safeguarding and child protection procedures meet current 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	118931
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	413317

This inspection of the school 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 the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	782
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Donald
Headteacher	Richard Moxham
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 May 2010
Telephone number	01304 206117
Fax number	01304 206074
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