



Fort Pitt Grammar School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118798
LEA Medway
Inspection number 280391
Inspection dates 10 May 2006 to 11 May 2006
Reporting inspector Jacqueline White HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Fort Pitt Hill
School category	Community		Chatham
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Kent ME4 6TJ
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	01634 842359
Number on roll	1087	Fax number	01634 817386
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Marion Cogger
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Julia Bell

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	10 May 2006 - 11 May 2006	280391

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Fort Pitt Grammar School is larger than average with 1,038 girls on roll, of whom 209 are in the sixth form.

The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average as is the number whose first language is not English. The number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is well below the national average. Two students have a statement of special educational needs. The number of students entitled to free school meals is also well below the national average.

The school has specialist status in science and mathematics.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Fort Pitt Grammar School is larger than average with 1,038 girls on roll, of whom 209 are in the sixth form.

The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average as is the number whose first language is not English. The number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is well below the national average. Two students have a statement of special educational needs. The number of students entitled to free school meals is also well below the national average.

The school has specialist status in science and mathematics.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school judged the effectiveness of the sixth form to be satisfactory but it is good. The sixth form is large and makes a significant contribution to the school. Standards are high and most students make good progress. There is a wide range of courses, particularly at advanced level, which meets the needs of all students. Whilst the quality of teaching and learning is good overall it is inconsistent. Consequently, students perform better in some subjects than in others. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Recent improvements in the arrangements to support students and monitor their progress ensure that most students are well informed about their progress and know how to improve their work. Students value the good relationships they have with staff and the support they receive. Managers deploy resources carefully to meet the learning needs of individual students. The sixth form gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish the system for monitoring individual student's progress across subjects.
- Ensure that assessment information is used effectively by all teachers to raise standards.
- Develop a consistent approach to marking that gives students guidance about what they must do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The selective nature of the school means that students enter with standards well above the national average but there is a wider spread of prior attainment than in many grammar schools. Between Years 7 to 9, progress in English and mathematics is good. At the end of Year 9, standards in English and mathematics are outstanding. In science students make slower progress because standards of teaching are more variable. Results are lower but still well above the national average.

GCSE results in 2005 were well above average. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that standards are rising and that students make good progress. The variation between subjects is too wide, particularly at the higher grades A* and A. Improvement here is a development focus for the school. The challenging target of every Year 11 student gaining five GCSE grades A* - C was missed by a small but significant margin in 2005.

There is no significant variation in standards between different groups of students. The small proportion of students who have learning difficulties and disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

This aspect of the school's work is good, with several strengths. Students' moral, social and cultural development is good. Many students take advantage of the wide range of opportunities for artistic, scientific and musical development, including visits overseas. Students' spiritual development is satisfactory. Although there is a 'Thought for the Week', opportunities are missed to allow students time to reflect. Students develop well morally and socially. They are supportive of each other and make substantial efforts on behalf of charitable causes both locally and nationally.

Students' behaviour and attitudes are good. Some parents and students are concerned about the disruptive behaviour of a small minority of students, but the school's behaviour management and support systems are good and problems are tackled effectively. The overwhelming majority of students enjoy being at school and their attendance is very good. In the sixth form, attendance has improved in the last year as a result of more rigorous monitoring. Students benefit from participation in sports and from the school's health projects. They understand the importance of being safe and adopting healthy lifestyles. The school council has promoted health issues effectively and successfully. The comprehensive personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) highlights these issues and the skills students need for employment and their future economic well-being. It also develops students' understanding of citizenship. Students learn a great deal by following this well thought out programme that is led energetically and delivered successfully by a committed team. Other subjects are introducing citizenship into their schemes of work to broaden students' experience of this area of learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. Teachers know their subjects very well and most enjoy excellent relationships with students.

The leaders responsible for driving the improvement of teaching and learning have a clear vision of what needs to be done to ensure that all students are stretched and

excited by learning. This vision is yet to illuminate every corner of practice. However, where it has been influential, activities are engaging and matched to the individual needs of students. Teachers set high expectations and sustain students' interest with an appropriate level of challenge. Students are required to think for themselves, take a lead and participate in tasks. Marking helps students to think about their work analytically and sets targets for improvement. Consequently, students have a clear understanding of how well they are doing. Not all lessons demonstrate these strengths. In some, the teacher's use of assessment information to plan and evaluate learning is inconsistent and marking is not sufficiently focused on improvement. The school is aware of weaknesses in science teaching and has appropriate strategies in place to tackle them.

The system for monitoring teaching and learning is improving practice. Observation of lessons is helping teachers to identify their strengths and understand how they can develop further. The monitoring of individual student's progress across subjects is not yet systematic enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

In Years 7 to 9 students follow a good range of subjects including, unusually, three modern foreign languages. This is appropriate to the students' high academic capability. In Years 10 and 11, students choose courses from a broad range of options. An effective work experience programme is in place. The range of activities offered outside the classroom is a strength. The curriculum is enriched by many visits and trips, in this country and abroad. High levels of participation show students' appreciation of the opportunities available to them.

The curriculum is being developed to provide a better match with students' needs. For example, Year 8 follow an accelerated learning programme and recently took national tests a year early. In addition, the GCSE programme will be slimmed and more advanced courses introduced with the aim of raising standards. The excellent leadership and management of these changes are based on a clear and appropriate vision for the future. The full benefits of the school's specialist status in science and mathematics are yet to be realised.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pastoral and special needs teams provide strong, effective and committed support for all students. The training of sixth form mentors to give guidance to younger students has been a successful innovation. Younger students appreciate and benefit from the help of their older peers. One Year 7 student said, 'It's comforting to know you're not judged'. All students receive good careers advice so that they are able to make sensible choices about their future.

Arrangements for child protection and the safeguarding of students are good. Students confirm they feel safe in school. They are confident that any incidents of bullying will

be dealt with effectively. Within this reassuring framework, students can and do achieve well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's leadership is excellent and strongly focused on improving teaching and learning. Her deep commitment to raising achievement is shared by other members of the senior leadership team. Together they are playing a major role in implementing rigorous approaches for tracking students' progress and monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision. These are proving effective but the school recognises the need to develop them further.

Procedures for observing lessons have improved since the last inspection and include detailed feedback to teachers on how to develop their teaching. The views of parents and students are sought regularly. The good response to the pre-inspection questionnaire showed that the majority of parents support the work of the school.

The school's self-evaluation is effective in identifying the priorities for improvement accurately. Senior leaders have a good understanding of strengths and areas for development. The headteacher holds heads of department to account. She fully recognises the variation in the quality of departmental leadership and management and has introduced well-structured line management arrangements to address this issue.

Governors know the school well. They provide effective challenge and keen support for its future development.

Improvements since the last inspection such as the development of the curriculum and the increasing rigour in monitoring students' progress demonstrate good capacity for further improvement. Resources are used effectively and the school provides good value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to my colleagues and I during our recent visit. We enjoyed meeting you and listening to your views about your work and about the school.

It is our judgement that Fort Pitt Grammar School is a good school. You contribute to the success of the school through your conscientious approach to your work and by taking part in school life with enthusiasm. You value learning and those taking national tests and examinations achieve good results. We were impressed by the positive attitudes which most of you show in lessons.

Your academic success is matched by the way in which you are developing as responsible young people. You understand the importance of contributing to the improvement of the wider community and many of you give up time to support others who are less well off.

The senior leaders in your school are ambitious for you. They want to achieve the very highest standards and have clear plans for further improvement. We have asked them to make sure they include:

- checking your progress across all subjects regularly
- using information about how well you are doing to plan learning that will challenge you and accelerate your progress
- developing a system of marking that gives you clear guidance about what you need to do to improve.

You and the staff have worked hard to establish your school as a caring place where individuals matter. We are confident that, together, you will continue to improve your school. Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White HMI