

Dover Grammar School for Boys

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118931
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	291289
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Samantha Morgan-Price HMI

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	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	540
6th form	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Donald
Headteacher	Sally Lees
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2004
School address	Astor Avenue Dover CT17 0DQ
Telephone number	01304 206117
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Dover Grammar School for Boys is located in the western heights of the town of Dover overlooking the ferry port. It is a smaller than average selective school with one girl on roll in the sixth form and a number of others attending through the consortium arrangements. The great majority of students are White and speak English as their home language. All of the students from minority ethnic heritages speak English fluently. The school draws students from quite a small geographical area, mainly from Dover and nearby towns in south east Kent. A small number of students have been identified as having additional learning needs (including those with a statement of special educational need). Attendance is high and improving whilst authorised and unauthorised absences are low.

The school obtained specialist status in Business and Enterprise in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'...The school is a professional, friendly, caring, learning environment and as a parent I could not ask for more...'

This is a good and improving school. Parents are now positive about the quality of education that the school provides. Since its last inspection two years ago, the school has undergone a transformation which has resulted in a much improved standard of education on offer to its students. The headteacher, ably assisted by her leadership team, middle managers and governors, provides good leadership and a clear vision for the future.

Students enter the school with high attainment, and continue to achieve well as they move through the school because teaching and the curriculum are good. However, not all progress is as good, especially for more able students. The school is taking steps to ensure this improves, but has been slow in fully addressing this.

Teachers plan effectively to ensure that activities in lessons engage most students, who develop confidence and make good progress. However, the use of assessment varies between subjects. As a result, some students are unaware of their attainment targets and how their work could be improved, and higher attainers in particular are not consistently challenged to do their very best.

Students behave well in class and demonstrate a mutual respect for each other. The extent to which students make a positive contribution to the community and their development of workplace skills and other skills are outstanding. The school is a safe and supportive environment promoting an ethos of care and mutual respect.

The school is run well. Along with an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, leaders have a strong determination to tackle those matters raised by the school's good self-evaluation but have not always done so quickly enough; for example, consistently challenging higher attaining students is still work in progress because the assessment of the performance of different ability groups has not been rigorous enough. Governance is good. Governors are aware of the key priorities for the school and how the senior management team are addressing them. The school demonstrates a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students joining the sixth form are given good guidance which ensures that the courses on offer are well matched to their needs. Teaching is good and standards have steadily improved. Standards are now above average, and students also make good progress because they are well motivated, have good relationships with staff and benefit from contact with students from the other schools in the consortium. The school cares for the students well and their personal development is good. The school works well with its consortium schools to widen a curriculum that is already good, and there are plans to extend the range of courses further. Students are given good opportunities to take responsibility, such as mentoring younger students. The new leadership of the sixth form is tackling underachievement in some subjects. Many of the initiatives are still in their infancy. Although their impact has not been fully realised they illustrate that there is good capacity for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality and consistency of assessment, particularly so that more able students can make better progress.
- Increase the rigour and timeliness with which the remaining identified weaknesses are tackled.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement is good and standards are exceptionally high.

The selective nature of the school means that students enter with overall standards that are well above average. A minority have specific weaknesses in literacy, particularly writing. Between Years 7 and 11 most students achieve well and make good progress. For higher attaining students achievement is satisfactory. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are consistently very high. They represent good progress in English and mathematics and satisfactory progress in science. Standards in science are improving.

Standards are rising between Years 9 to 11. In 2006 the school enjoyed its best ever GCSE results in terms of the number of higher grades A*–C gained by each student and also the quality of the grades in their best eight subjects. Results in English were particularly strong with half the students gaining grades A* or A. Inspection evidence shows that standards are continuing to rise and that current Year 11 students are on course to achieve their challenging targets for 2007. Good support means that the small proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve as well as others.

In the sixth form good teaching and support enable students to make good progress and achieve standards above the national average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Students generally enjoy school. They work effectively with their teachers, and feel safe as a result of the high priority the school places on the safety and well-being of all students. Health and safety are taken seriously. There is an effective anti-bullying policy. Vulnerable students are well supported and the school works closely with other agencies to provide appropriate support. There is good support for students to progress to higher education or employment when they leave school. The development of students' capacity to achieve economic well-being is outstanding, partly as a result of the school's newly awarded business and enterprise status. Students make an outstanding contribution to the local community.

Students are polite, confident and well behaved. They attend regularly and are generally punctual. Overall attendance is good and improving. Students' moral, social and cultural development is good and is well supported by the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. A good range of school activities is available to students.

The school prepares students well for taking on responsibility through the peer mentoring scheme, the personal development programme for Year 12 students and effective prefect teams.

Assemblies provide a good opportunity for reflecting on issues and thereby contribute to students' spiritual development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subjects they teach. They are successful in communicating their enthusiasm to their students, and they plan their lessons well to include a good range of activities. Students enjoy their lessons, and they make good progress because of the good level of pace and challenge provided by teachers. In particularly successful lessons, this enables higher attaining students in particular to develop their understanding of topics and their powers of expression, but such challenge is not provided consistently. Behaviour in lessons is good: teachers have high expectations of their students and have established good working relationships with them. However, some teachers do not give students enough opportunities to develop their skills as independent learners through the use of group and pair work. In the sixth form, students become increasingly confident and articulate learners. They listen to and respect each other's views, and learn from one another as well as from their teachers.

The use of assessment is inconsistent: not all students know the levels they are achieving, or what they should be aiming for. Some teachers make assessment an integral part of their teaching, but this is not the case throughout the school, and students are not always given sufficiently detailed written information about what they need to do in order to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's curriculum is generally well tailored to the needs and interests of its students, including those who have been identified as being particularly gifted and talented. New curriculum arrangements have resulted in increased challenge for students in Years 7 to 9 and have enabled students in Year 11 to take some advanced level courses early, although the limitations in assessment mean that more able students are not always fully stretched. Work-related learning is an outstanding feature of the curriculum. Business and enterprise status is having a positive impact on students at all levels in the school. The school works well with other local providers and with local businesses to prepare students well for future employment. Students develop good enterprise skills through undertaking projects in partnership with local businesses, and through work experience placements, visits and conferences. Students enjoy taking part in a wide range of cultural and sporting activities, and benefit from the school's strong international links by taking part in joint projects, for example in drama and business with its French partner school. Sixth form students have access to a good range of advanced level courses, including vocational courses offered by other local providers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support. This starts with the thoughtful induction for Year 7 students and goes through to the good preparation for careers and university life for sixth form students. The procedures for safeguarding students are in place. Bullying is dealt with promptly and well so that students increasingly feel safe. Vulnerable students have good support from staff in the Learning Centre and outside agencies, resulting in them attending well and making good progress.

While the school involves parents and students in setting targets, assessment is inconsistent across the school. Individual education plans for the small number of students with additional needs are not specific enough to measure progress. Tutor groups include students from Years 7 to 13. While this benefits the younger students, some sixth-formers do not feel that this approach meets their needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school has inspirational leadership: the headteacher and senior team have a vision that is understood and shared by the school community. There is a real sense of teamwork and commitment to ensure that all students reach their potential. Parents, staff and governors speak very highly of the headteacher's leadership. The school's self-evaluation outlines what needs to be done and involves the support of staff and governors. The focus on improvement is continuing to raise standards in most subject areas. However, not all departmental plans are monitored in a timely manner.

Governors support the school well. They work closely with managers across the school and provide appropriate challenge in relation to the school's performance.

School leaders are committed to promoting an inclusive ethos. Even though they are aware of the performance of different groups of students, not enough work has yet been done in respect of reporting and promoting the progress made by these groups.

The school supports and develops its staff well. Resources are effectively deployed. There was a significant reduction in the school's deficit in 2005–6. The school offers good value for money.

The school has made improvement on all key issues since the last inspection. Teaching and learning and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum have improved and continue to do so. However, the quality assurance of assessment still varies considerably from department to department, and as a result challenging more able learners remains a management priority.

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.

Annex A

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
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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 effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
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	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

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	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We thank you for welcoming us and telling us about your work and views of life in school. Yours is a good school, and we agree with you that it has many positive features.

- You enjoy going to school.
- Your headteacher and other managers are working hard and have made a lot of improvements to the school facilities which have benefited you all.
- Your teachers work hard to ensure that your classes are interesting and varied.
- Your personal development has been greatly improved by the business and enterprise work you are involved in. You also all make an excellent contribution to the local community. This work has given you good business skills and prepares you well for the future.

The inspection team did recognise that there were some points that the school needs to address. Therefore we have asked the school to:

- improve the way in which targets in your work are identified and are notified to you, so that all of you, but particularly those who are capable of the highest standards, are aware what targets you are working towards and how you can improve your work
- act more quickly in putting right some of the areas for improvement that those in charge of the school have clearly identified.

We hope that you enjoy the rest of your time in school and continue to work hard.