

# Chatham Grammar School for Girls

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118901
<b>Local Authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	313142
<b>Inspection date</b>	12 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patricia Metham HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	989
6th form	280
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Vacant Position
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Gundry
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 September 2003
<b>School address</b>	Rainham Road Chatham ME5 7EH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 851262
<b>Fax number</b>	01634 571928

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; teaching and learning; leadership and management; curriculum; and, care, guidance and support. Evidence was gained from lesson observations, from discussions with leaders and pupils and from the evaluation of a range of documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a selective girls' secondary school of average size, with a small number of boys in the sixth form. It is set in a relatively disadvantaged urban area from which it draws most of its students, but has a much lower than average proportion of students eligible for free school meals. Levels of attainment on entry are significantly higher than the national average but not as high as those in many other selective schools. Almost all students are of White British heritage and have English as their first language. The school has had specialist technology status since 1994. Since 1997, it has had Investor in People accreditation and an Artsmark Award since 2002.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding strengths in the care, guidance and support it provides, in the personal development and well-being of its students and in the overall quality of education enjoyed by its sixth form. Parents and students value its inclusive approach and welcoming atmosphere. 'Its ethos is to nurture and support the pupils' said one parent, a view echoed by girls in Years 7 to 10: 'There's always someone to help you...The school is very supportive, whether it's something academic or to do with your family...Your confidence builds up.' Sixth formers make an important contribution to this nurturing culture as mentors and as role models.

Standards reached by these academically able students are generally well above national averages. There are, however, variations in the results attained in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. Students respond with enthusiasm and success when set challenging targets. They do particularly well in mathematics, in design and technology, and in science when taken as three separate subjects. In the few subjects where expectations are not high enough, results are less impressive since students below the sixth form tend to work to the targets they are given. Students' progress in Years 7 to 11 is generally good, although there have been marked fluctuations in English over recent years. In 2007, to add greater impetus and challenge, the school entered Year 8 students for the national tests in English usually taken at the end of Year 9 and achieved good results. This now allows students to follow one of three English pathways in Years 9 to 11. Some will follow an accelerated course to early GCSE entry, whilst others will have time to consolidate their progress or take an additional subject. Careful tracking of students' progress and attainment and detailed analysis of data provided nationally are used to identify underachieving individuals and determine the style and level of intervention needed.

There is sensitive and highly effective support for the very small number of students who have physical disabilities or who find specific study skills challenging, with excellent use of external agencies whenever appropriate. Teachers, as well as students and their families, benefit from clear and regularly updated guidance. These students progress at least as well as their contemporaries.

Standards achieved in the sixth form are good overall, with some variations between subjects. Increasing numbers are joining the school at this stage, including boys from local high schools that do not offer advanced level courses. Sixth form students make excellent progress, partly because they complement good teaching with their own well developed skills and determination to succeed.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are well qualified, with confident subject knowledge. Continuing professional development, including mentoring and coaching, has ensured that they understand the need to develop a variety of approach and to encourage independent learning. Their rapport with students is based on mutual respect and shared goals. Many use information and communication technology (ICT) with confidence and skill to illustrate, inform and challenge. Students' scope for independent thought and enquiry is, however, limited when discussions are too strongly teacher led or when lessons do not provide appropriate challenge across the full ability range. Most students are cheerfully compliant rather than demanding, conscientiously completing the tasks set. They appreciate the constructive feedback given in class and in the marking of written work. This, they say, becomes more consistently substantial and focused as they move up through the school.

Students take their learning seriously, whether working on their own or collaborating with others, and are keen to do well. Rates of attendance are significantly better than the national average and behaviour both in lessons and around the school is excellent. Students understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and enjoy sports and activities such as dance. Some regret the disappearance of sweets and fizzy drinks from vending machines on site and not all make healthy food choices, but most appreciate the school canteen's healthy menus and support the school's policies. Students feel safe and are very confident that any problems will be quickly and sensitively resolved either by teachers or by sixth form mentors. They value opportunities to contribute to school policy making and to evaluations of teaching and learning, responding in a sensible and constructive way. They develop subject knowledge, skills and aspirations that will serve them well in later life.

The main school curriculum combines traditional elements, such as Latin, with newer disciplines such as ICT and product design, and is good overall. Girls in Year 7 sample three European languages before choosing two for continued study in Years 8 and 9. Years 10 and 11 have the opportunity to study AS level courses out of school hours, alongside their GCSE programme. The school is exploring possibilities for greater flexibility in Years 9 to 11 arising from early entry for national tests. The longer term impact of some initiatives has yet to be seen. The excellent sixth form curriculum offers a well judged range of mainly traditional and some applied AS and A2 courses. Students may also take vocational courses run by other institutions within the consortium to which the school belongs. Only a few opt to do so, but all appreciate having the choice.

Leadership and management are good overall and excellent in the sixth form. The governing body sets precise, short term targets for the headteacher and monitors progress carefully. Financial controls are good. Secure child protection procedures are in place. The school knows itself well and is comfortable with the targets set. The emphasis is on continued improvement in standards and achievement, supported by a steadily developing curriculum and professional development for teachers. These priorities support the school development plan and are manageable. Middle leadership and management are generally strong but in a few areas expectations are not high enough to ensure that all of these able students achieve top grades at GCSE, and the quality and impact of teaching are not always monitored with sufficient rigour. The school is well placed to improve further and highly effective management of the sixth form makes the capacity to do so there excellent. Particularly impressive are the leadership and management of community linked aspects of the school's specialist technology status. Initiatives range from science resource packs and modelling of good teaching in primary schools, with evidence of improved attainment for children, to provision of ICT skills for unemployed adults. One of the primary schools involved wrote, 'The confidence and aptitude of the children in using technical equipment is measurable by the increasing confidence and understanding recorded in their work.'

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

The sixth form is excellent, with highly effective leadership. Students describe it as 'a good learning environment'. They value highly the guidance given by tutors and subject staff and almost all feel that the curriculum matches their interests and aspirations exceptionally well, combining a wide range of academic courses with a small number of more popular vocational options, such as health and social care. The school also makes provision for some students to follow additional courses, such as dance, at other schools and colleges locally and encourages

students from elsewhere to take advantage of courses offered by the school. Those who join the school at this stage, including growing numbers of boys, settle down well and make very good progress, although a few transfer to other colleges at the end of Year 12 to pursue more vocational options. The school provides an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities.

Standards are above national averages and steadily rising. They exceed expectations in some subjects, although not in all. The most recent AS and A2 results for art and design, for example, do not compare well with national figures. Nonetheless, the average points score achieved in 2007 examinations was the school's highest so far. Achievement is outstanding. Students across the sixth form's ability range bring skills, approaches and motivation to their studies that underpin their excellent progress. Teaching is good, showing secure subject knowledge and commitment to high standards, but some lessons are too strongly teacher led to encourage independent learning.

Sixth formers say that the school helps them develop positively as individuals and citizens. They take very seriously their responsibility for younger students, acting as mentors and contributing to discussion about subject choices with girls in Year 9 and Year 11, as well as organising events such as Rag Week and fundraising for charity. 'We really enjoy this aspect of the sixth form', commented one student, reflecting the view of many.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Establish consistency of good practice across middle leadership and management, including rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning.
- Ensure that expectations are consistently high and targets are sufficiently challenging for all students.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	1
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, 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**

13 December, 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Chatham Grammar School for Girls, Chatham ME5 7EH

When we visited your school recently to see how well it is doing, you made our task much easier and hugely enjoyable by the cheerful and courteous way you answered our questions, showed us your work, and shared your thoughts with us.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to let you know what we feel your school does particularly well and how it might be even better. We agree that it is a good school with an outstanding sixth form. As some of you explained to us, amongst its outstanding strengths are its friendliness and the well judged care, guidance and support you are given by your teachers and by students in the sixth form. It was good to hear that you feel safe and are confident that any difficulties will be quickly and sensitively resolved. We were impressed by how articulate and self possessed you are, and how willingly you take on responsibility for each other and for those in need in the wider community. Helped by good teaching, you make good progress in the main school and outstanding progress in the sixth form.

So that you all fulfil your considerable potential, we have suggested that everyone with responsibility for your progress should follow the example of those subject leaders and managers who are most effective in monitoring and improving the impact of teaching on your learning, and that you should each be set targets that really challenge you. You can help by having high expectations for yourself and stretching to achieve them.

I wish you and your school continuing success. Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham Her Majesty's Inspector2



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Patricia Metham  
Her Majesty's Inspector