

Gravesend Grammar School

Church Walk, Gravesend, DA12 2PR

Inspection dates 25–26 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The school's motto of 'consule cunctis' meaning care for all permeates all aspects of the school's work. It fuels the powerful drive for excellence of the executive headteacher and the governors and is understood and shared by all members of the school community.
- Students' behaviour is exceptional in and outside the classroom. Relationships are a particular strength of the school. They are marked by respect and care for everyone with the result that students thrive academically and personally.
- Students feel extremely safe in school as a result of the very robust arrangements for safeguarding, the teaching they receive about keeping safe and of the quality of relationships that the school creates.
- The curriculum is challenging. It is rigorously academic and is enriched by provision for the arts and by an excellent programme of extra curricular opportunities.
- Staff share the headteacher's vision; they are dedicated to the students' success. Staff benefit from the school's care for their personal and professional development. They rise to the challenge of the very high expectations of them and they contribute generously to all of the enrichment activities the school provides.
- Teaching is outstanding as a result of teachers' deep subject knowledge. Teachers have the highest expectations for all of the students. Staff benefit from an excellent training programme that makes sure all are up to date and always developing their expertise.
- All of the students attain very high standards and make excellent progress as a result of the quality of the teaching they receive and as a result of their own ambition and positive attitudes to learning.
- The sixth form provides an excellent preparation for students' next steps in life whether at university or in training and employment. Students value highly the opportunities for academic study and the exceptional quality of the wider experiences they are offered for leadership and enrichment.
- The arrangements the school makes for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students are a particular strength. They prepare students thoroughly as responsible and informed citizens, ready to take their place in life in modern society, with a strong understanding of British values.
- Governors are highly ambitious for the school and use their expertise to challenge performance and thus contribute strongly to the school's very effective drive for continuous improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 35 part lessons, six of which were observed jointly with members of the extended senior leadership group. During lessons, inspectors scrutinised students' written work.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body and representatives of the Trust Board, with the executive headteacher and associate headteacher, with senior and middle leaders including the heads of the sixth form, teachers, students from Key Stages 3 and 4 and from the sixth form (Year 12).
- Inspectors read a range of documents provided by the school including the minutes of the governing body and the Trust Board meetings, records of students' achievement, planning and review documents and policies about safeguarding and child protection.
- The views of the 166 parents that filled out the online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered alongside one email sent to the inspection team during the inspection.
- The staff at the school completed 52 questionnaires and these were taken into account.
- Students from Year 11 and Year 13 were not on site during the inspection as a result of the ending of the examination period.

Inspection team

Patricia Barford, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rebecca Allott	Additional Inspector
Nourredin Khassal	Additional Inspector
Paul Murphy	Additional Inspector
David Powell	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average selective school for boys aged 11–18. Girls may join the sixth form from local schools and a small number, around 40, join each year.
- The school is part of a multi academy trust, the Gravesend Grammar School Trust, and is federated with a local primary school called Whitehill Primary School. Both schools share the same Trust Board.
- A very small proportion of the students, around 5%, is eligible for the pupil premium grant that is provided by the government for students in local authority care and for those known to be eligible for free school meals. This proportion is well below the national average.
- There are no students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up grant that supports students in Year 7 who have not reached the expected levels in English and mathematics at age 11.
- Most students in the school are of White British heritage. Around one third of the students are from an ethnic minority group, the largest being Indian and Black African.
- Very few students have a disability or any form of special educational needs.
- The school does not use any form of alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's floor standards that set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Embed the new, excellent approach to assessment devised by the school's middle leaders across all of the subjects of the curriculum so that teachers are able to ensure students make outstanding progress in all of their subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The ethos of the school is summed up in the mission statement 'challenge and opportunity in a caring environment'. These three themes of challenge, opportunity and care are the pillars of the school's approach to all of its work. The executive headteacher, his senior leadership group and governors have created a school where every individual student is known and can flourish.
- Leaders' use of the pupil premium grant is successfully targeted to make the most of every opportunity for each individual disadvantaged student. There is no discrimination and all can and do benefit equally from what the school has to offer.
- Staff are proud to work at the school and their morale is high. Students told the inspectors that one of the best things about their school was their teachers who give unstintingly of their time to support their academic work and their personal well-being.
- Leaders at all levels, including middle leaders, have created a climate for learning that is enriched by the quality of the relationships among students, among staff and between students and their teachers. Students are confident there is always a trusted adult in whom they can confide who will listen and act whether in relation to academic work or personal worries. Students take on formal leadership positions in school, especially in the sixth form as prefects.
- The curriculum, including assemblies and tutor time, provides exceptional opportunities to develop students' awareness of all of the risks that young people face in the modern world. Students talk authoritatively about safe use of the internet, about respect for diversity and about the risks of any kind of extremism, including extremism of religious belief. Students are fully aware of their responsibilities as citizens of Britain and of the wider world as a result. They place great importance on British values such as tolerance and respect for others. Students receive very timely advice about careers and work throughout their time in school.
- In addition to the subjects of the English Baccalaureate, students in the school's two-year Key Stage 3 follow a creative arts programme that leads to the award of the Bronze Arts Award. Students are very positive about this course and express great enjoyment of it. The school offers an exciting choice of extra curricular opportunities. Students are well travelled both in this country and abroad; they can experience arts events, sporting events as both participants and spectators.
- The quality of teaching is kept constantly under review in a thorough programme of monitoring. Any underperformance is tackled robustly with the result that teaching continues to improve.
- Safeguarding and child protection arrangements are exemplary. Almost all of the parents who responded to the Parent View online survey would recommend the school to others and agree that the school keeps their children safe.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors both on the Trust Board and on the local governing body are analytical of the school's performance and also of their own. They scrutinise their own skills to identify gaps in the membership and to fill them with the expertise they need. As a result of their very positive partnership with the school's leaders, they know very well indeed about the school's strengths and also about what can be even better. They plan for and obtain their own training to be able to interrogate information presented to them for the benefit of the students. Governors expect challenging benchmarks to be used to evaluate how well the school is doing and they link evidence about achievement to the quality of teaching. As well as reporting from the executive headteacher and from senior leaders, governors receive reports from other staff that attend meetings to present information about their own subjects and areas of responsibility. Governors supplement this information by the use of systematic, themed visits to the school and by the commissioning of external advice.
 - Governors are uncompromising in their policy for performance management and, with the executive headteacher, ensure that any pay progression is linked to evidence about students' performance.
 - Governors are dedicated to the well-being of every student and have worked hard to ensure that the arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are as tight as possible. Governors are aware of all of their statutory responsibilities and their high quality planning ensures that they meet them.
 - Governors are experienced, long-standing members of the local community. They are committed, alongside the executive headteacher, to the support of other local schools and have formed a federation in a multi academy trust with a local primary school.
 - Financial planning and oversight are of high quality.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students' enthusiasm for their learning makes a major contribution to the success of their lessons. Students and staff enjoy mutually respectful relationships, so even minor misbehaviour is rare. As a consequence, rates of exclusion are much lower than those found in other schools nationally. A system of internal exclusion is used sparingly to respond to incidents of misbehaviour and, in the case of both external and internal exclusion, one experience is enough to prevent a repeat.
- Almost all of the parents who responded to the online questionnaire believe that the school makes sure students are well behaved. Staff responding to the inspection questionnaire believe behaviour is very well managed.
- Relationships, both in the formal setting of the classroom and in corridors and public spaces, are exceptional. Students commend the house system for helping them get to know others.
- Students are unfailingly polite and helpful. They are socially confident and are able to engage maturely in conversations with visitors and guests.
- The small number of students whose special educational needs are related to behaviour are very well supported so that they improve their behaviour as they move up the school.
- Students are very proud of their school. Attendance is very high and students are punctual to school and to lessons; no time is wasted.
- The environment is litter free and is treated with great respect.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. All of the staff are well trained and knowledgeable about safety and safeguarding.
- Students are very knowledgeable about their own safety and about risk. They feel very safe in school and outside school as a result of the work the school does to teach them about what can go wrong and how to cope. Students say that their tutors and heads of school are always there to listen and to help.
- Bullying of any type is rare and dealt with very firmly. Students have the confidence to report any incident they see, because they believe they have a duty to help other students.
- The curriculum provides excellent opportunities to learn about safety and managing risks.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge that they use to make learning exciting and, importantly, challenging. Teachers intervene quickly and effectively to explain any misconceptions that may have arisen. In this they are very well supported by the small team of teaching assistants.
- Teachers expect the very best from the students and are committed to them achieving the very highest standards. Teachers ask rich questions to push students to think hard and to express complicated ideas. Sixth form students in particular praised their teachers' subject knowledge and agreed it was 'outstanding'.
- All of the students, including the small numbers with special educational needs and students who are disadvantaged, benefit from teaching that is very well planned to meet their needs.
- A new system for assessment has been designed by middle leaders in the school to be used in all subjects to track progress towards the very highest standards. In subjects where it is already in use, the impact can be seen in excellent academic writing in history and English and very challenging tasks in mathematics. Teachers routinely check students' understanding during lessons. In a small number of subjects, the use of the new assessment system is still being embedded and so is not yet a powerful tool to help teachers ensure outstanding progress.
- Almost all parents who completed the online questionnaire agree that students receive appropriate homework for their age and that it is often challenging.
- The school provides a range of opportunities for online learning to further promote independence.
- The teaching of mathematics is exceptional and leads to very high standards of achievement.
- There is a proper emphasis in school on reading, as well as on writing and communication across all subjects, with the result that students' academic development, writing skills and personal enjoyment of reading are encouraged.

The achievement of pupils**is outstanding**

- Students enter the school with attainment that is above the national average. At the end of Year 11 almost all of the students attain five or more GCSE passes including English and mathematics, including those students whose attainment on entry was at the national average for their age group.
- In most subjects, a very high proportion of students attain an A* or A grade.
- Subjects that in 2014 performed less well than others are set to perform highly in 2015 and beyond as a result of strong leadership, intervention and changes made to improve students' performance. The school's leaders rigorously scrutinise data and information about students' progress in all of their subjects and intervene quickly and incisively when underachievement is a risk.
- The proportions of all of the students, including the very small number of disadvantaged students, making excellent progress in English and mathematics are very high and well above the rates of progress for all students in other schools nationally. There is little difference between the grades disadvantaged students achieve and the grades of other students in the school and they achieved better than other students nationally in 2014.
- Students of Indian background and those of Black African background attain highly and make progress that matches and sometimes exceeds that of other students in the school.
- The very small number of students with a disability or special educational needs are tracked very carefully and make excellent progress so that they achieve very well indeed.
- In 2014, 28 students were entered early for GCSE mathematics and most attained an A* and some an A grade. The proportions of students in the school attaining A* or A grades in mathematics is very high indeed.
- The most-able students are challenged to achieve the very highest grades in the Stretch and Challenge programme. This programme aims to promote ambition and self-belief. For example students in advanced level physics are allocated a mentor to support them in their efforts to achieve an A grade. An able writers group works together successfully on improving their standard with some success in having their work published.
- The school's internal data show increasing numbers of students will achieve A* to A grades at GCSE and will also achieve the highest grades at advanced level.
- Most of the Year 11 students progress to the sixth form, apart from a small number who wish to follow specialist courses not available in the school, such as one student in 2014 who chose to attend a football academy.
- Achievement in the sixth form is excellent and improving for all students, including for those who are disadvantaged, as a result of excellent teaching and the wide range of support and enrichment provided that contribute strongly to students' well-being and personal development.

The sixth form provision**is outstanding**

- Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding, characterised by a drive and passion for the success of the students. A wide range of advanced level subjects is offered to meet the needs of the students transferring from Year 11. Provision meets the current standards for 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Students praise the excellent induction to the sixth form, in particular those students who are new to the school, for example the girls who join the sixth form from other schools.
- Sixth form teaching is outstanding in its personalised approach to each student, in particular the thoroughness of assessment and the availability of teachers to provide additional support whenever required.
- Students value the extensive provision for extra-curricular opportunities, for volunteering and for leadership and personal development. Safeguarding and safety continue to be a priority in the sixth form including continuing work on radicalism and preventing extremism, deepening their understanding of British values, driving safely, and avoidance of drugs. Students are extremely well prepared for their next steps.
- The sixth form students play a vital part in the school as role models for younger students who look up to them and see them as a source of help in the same way that they look to their teachers for support.
- Almost all of the students remain in school from Year 12 to Year 13 and the rate of retention is above the national rate. Achievement is outstanding with students making excellent progress.

- Guidance throughout students' time in the sixth form and about next steps is of the highest quality and leads to eight or nine out of ten students progressing to university. Students are challenged to aim high and around one third progress to top universities.

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	137099
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	461946

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1,142
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	311
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Murray
Executive headteacher	Geoff Wybar
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 May 2012
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