

Chatham Grammar School for Boys

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136594
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	382227
Inspection dates	23–24 February 2012
Lead inspector	Robin Gaff

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Secondary
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	911
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	360
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Acting chair	Peter Horton
Headteacher	David Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 December 2006
School address	Holcombe Maidstone Road Chatham ME4 6JB
Telephone number	01634 830083
Fax number	01634 826230
Email address	office@cgsb.co.uk

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

Robin Gaff	Additional inspector
Roger Garrett	Additional inspector
Lesley Leak	Additional inspector
Christine Murrell	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, including safeguarding and attendance records, monitoring files, and self-evaluation and planning documents. They analysed questionnaire responses from 150 students and 57 members of staff, as well as 294 questionnaires returned by parents and carers. Inspectors observed 39 part lessons, taught by 38 teachers, observing three lessons jointly with senior leaders. They also made shorter visits to classes to observe individual students and groups at work. They held meetings with groups of students, school leaders and members of the governing body.

Information about the school

Chatham Grammar School for Boys became an academy in April 2011. It is an average-sized secondary school. A high and increasing proportion of students, including almost all the girls, join the sixth form from other local schools. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below average. Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is much lower than that found nationally. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is well-below average. The main group represented is that of students who have autistic spectrum disorder. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. It was granted specialist status in science and technology in 2009 and is a member of a local teaching school consortium. The school has gained Healthy Schools status and International School and Eco-Schools awards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Students behave well and feel safe. The school cares well for its students and promotes their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development effectively. The sixth form is good. Students in the sixth form make good progress because they benefit from a wide variety of suitable courses and from consistently good teaching. The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory rather than good because students' achievement and the quality of teaching are not consistently good or better in all areas. Monitoring by school leaders has not been effective enough in addressing successfully all the causes of weaker teaching.
- Students' achievement is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. Students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs, make satisfactory progress from their starting points in reaching levels of attainment which, by the end of Year 11, are well above national averages. They make slower progress, especially in English, when teachers make insufficiently high demands of them, or do not give them enough opportunities for independent learning.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. Teachers know their subjects well and most plan lessons which include a good variety of activities. They do not always check students' learning often enough during lessons or give them enough detailed written feedback on their progress.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and sometimes outstanding. They have few concerns about bullying because they say the school deals with it effectively when it does occur.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the school's last inspection. The leadership of teaching and the management of performance are satisfactory, but have not yet resulted in teaching being consistently good across the school.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement by the end of Key Stage 4, especially in English, by ensuring that all teachers consistently:
 - conduct lessons at an appropriate pace and provide students with sufficient challenge
 - check students' progress during the course of lessons and modify activities when the need arises
 - give students sufficiently detailed and frequent written feedback to enable them to know the next steps they need to take to improve their work.

- Improve the effectiveness of school leaders in raising the quality of teaching by:
 - making more robust use of lesson observations and work scrutiny to identify and eradicate the features of less-effective teaching and assessment
 - ensuring that weaker teachers receive sufficiently rigorous support to enable them to improve their practice.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The attainment of students when they join the school in Year 7 is well above the national average. Their attainment by the end of Year 11, as represented by the proportion of students who gain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics, is well-above average. Students' progress in English, although satisfactory, is slower than in other subjects. Leaders have identified the causes of this relative underperformance and have taken effective steps to address it, including providing additional support for individual students who are at risk of underachieving. Students join the sixth form with levels of attainment which are broadly average and are lower than those found in other, similar schools. Sixth-form students, including those who join from other schools, make good progress in reaching levels of attainment that are broadly average, but have steadily risen.

Students relate well to their teachers and, in most lessons, work hard and engage sensibly in lesson activities. They develop levels of skill in reading, writing, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) which ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education and for future employment. Students know how well they are doing and, in general terms, what they need to do to reach their targets. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make progress at least as good as and sometimes better than their peers, because of the well-targeted support they receive in lessons and in individual and small-group sessions. This is also the case for the small number of students who speak English as an additional language. Most parents and carers believe that their children are making good progress, although a few expressed

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reservations about their progress in English.

When teachers pitch lessons at an appropriate level to match students' abilities and engage their interest fully, the students respond enthusiastically and make good and sometimes outstanding progress. This was the case in a Year 12 art lesson, when the teacher explained the main task clearly and succinctly, ensured that students understood fully what they were required to do, and enabled them to make excellent progress by exploring and developing their ideas independently and in pairs. The pace of learning is slower, however, when teachers do not plan work which is sufficiently engaging or gives students enough opportunities to learn for themselves and from each other.

Quality of teaching

Although satisfactory overall, the quality of teaching is often good and is sometimes outstanding, especially in the sixth form. There are no endemic weaknesses in any subject, curriculum area or key stage. Students benefit from a good range of choices in Key Stage 4, including a range of modern foreign languages, and in the sixth form. Most parents and carers believe that their children are taught well, although a few raised concerns about lack of continuity in teaching in English owing to long-term staff absence caused by illness.

Most teachers have high levels of expertise in and are enthusiastic about their subjects and share their detailed understanding of examination requirements with their students to good effect. Teachers across different curriculum areas plan effectively to develop students' literacy, mathematical and ICT skills. They have high expectations of students in terms of behaviour and are consistent in ensuring that they are met. Teachers explain topics and activities clearly and most, but not all, use questioning well to check students' understanding during the course of lessons and to develop their learning. Most include a variety of activities in their lessons, including opportunities for students to learn from pair and group discussions, and by assessing their own and each other's work. In an outstanding Year 8 geography lesson, students showed the excellent progress they had made by presenting and discussing their findings on the features of sustainable cities. In the final part of the lesson, the teacher enabled the students to develop their understanding of the social, cultural, and moral issues arising from the topic.

In weaker lessons, however, teachers talked too much without checking students' understanding, did not ensure that time was used effectively, or gave students tasks which did not include sufficient challenge to enable them to make as much progress as they could. The majority of teachers mark students' work regularly and thoroughly, but some do not give students, particularly in Key Stages 3 and 4, sufficiently frequent and detailed feedback about their strengths and what they need to do to improve their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

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Most parents and careers agree that the standard of behaviour at the school is good, and inspectors' findings endorse this view. Although a few expressed concerns about bullying or behaviour in class, inspectors found very little evidence to support those views. Students are courteous and polite to visitors, are respectful to staff, and listen to and respect one another's views. The school is a harmonious community in which students from different backgrounds relate well to each other. Students say that they are happy to come to school and that they feel safe there. They show that they understand clearly how to keep themselves safe by, for example, their responsible handling of equipment in science and technology lessons. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including those that are based on prejudices related to sexual orientation or race, and on the misuse of the internet or mobile telephones. Students report and school records confirm that incidences of bullying are rare and students say they are confident that any that do occur will be dealt with firmly, promptly and effectively. Students contribute to the school's success in this respect themselves, for example through the school council's work in developing effective anti-bullying policies. Attendance for all groups of students is well-above average and punctuality is good.

Students behave safely and sensibly in corridors, playgrounds, and the dining hall. In the classroom, their good levels of engagement allow lessons to flow smoothly. They are attentive to their teachers and work cooperatively and productively together when given the opportunity to do so. On the rare occasions when behaviour in lessons is satisfactory rather than good, this is because activities are not sufficiently stimulating or challenging, or because teachers spend too long in introducing and explaining activities before enabling students to work independently.

Leadership and management

School leaders have a clear vision for and a concerted approach to improving the quality of provision and outcomes for students and have succeeded in communicating them to staff. The governing body brings a good range of expertise to the school, has identified areas for improvement accurately and is prepared to challenge as well as support the leadership team. Leaders' evaluation of the school's performance is generally accurate, although they acknowledge that their appraisal of the quality of teaching has been, on occasion, over-generous. They have implemented a systematic programme of professional development for staff, enabling them to share and develop examples of good and outstanding practice, both within and outside of the school, through the consortium to which the school belongs. Senior and middle leaders observe lessons and scrutinise students' work regularly, but they have not always used the results of their observations to raise the quality of teaching in all areas from satisfactory to good or better.

The curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory and it is good in the sixth form because of the wide range of opportunities leading to further education and training. The accelerated curriculum, whereby students began GCSE courses in Year 9 and, for the most part, complete them in Year 10, has enabled students to gain a wider range of qualifications and has enhanced their personal and social development. It

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has, however, resulted in fewer students gaining the highest grades at GCSE than would be expected given their prior levels of attainment. Leaders have recognised this and have accordingly modified the curriculum in order to give students more time to complete their GCSE courses and to achieve their full potential at this level. In the sixth form, students can choose from a wide range of academic and applied advanced level courses, which are matched well to their interests and abilities and enable them to achieve well. Students throughout the school benefit from a good variety of extra-curricular and enrichment activities which promote their spiritual and cultural development well. These include visits to and exchanges with schools in other countries in Europe and in Asia, during which students develop their linguistic and social skills, as well as a good understanding and appreciation of other cultures.

The school works well with parents and carers, many of whom comment on the high quality of pastoral care which their children receive. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are satisfied with most if not all aspects of their children's experience of the school. A few report that the school does not always respond quickly enough to their concerns.

The school promotes equality of opportunity effectively. There are no significant gaps in performance between different groups of students and there is no evidence of any discrimination. Arrangements for safeguarding students, including procedures for ensuring that staff are suitable for their roles, are robust.

The school has made the improvements recommended by its last inspection report, including raising the quality of sixth-form provision and ensuring that teachers use ICT more effectively. This, together with other steps it has taken, not all of which have had sufficient time to be reflected fully in students' achievement, and leaders' accurate self-evaluation, indicate that its capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 February 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Chatham Grammar School for Boys, Chatham ME4 6JB

On behalf of the inspection team, I thank you all for being so welcoming and helpful to us when we recently visited your school. The purpose of this letter is to tell you about our findings.

- Yours is a satisfactory school. The sixth form is good. You make satisfactory progress in gaining high GCSE grades. Students' achievement in the sixth form is good.
- Your teachers plan lessons carefully and most include a good range of activities. They do not always check your learning thoroughly enough or give you enough regular, detailed written feedback about how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve your work.
- You get on well together and with your teachers, behave well, and feel safe in school. You say you are not worried about bullying because it does not happen often and that the school deals with it well when it does occur.
- The staff take good care of you and give you good opportunities to learn about different cultures.

The headteacher, all the staff, and the governing body are committed to making the school even better. To help them to do this, we have asked them to:

- help you to make better progress in Key Stage 4, especially in English, by ensuring that all your teachers consistently give you work that stretches you enough, check your progress regularly during lessons, and make sure you know what to do to improve your work
- make sure all your lessons are at least good, and give teachers who need it the support they require to make this happen.

All of you can help by continuing to behave well and by telling your teachers what helps you to learn most effectively. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Robin Gaff
Lead inspector

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