

Gillingham School

Hardings Lane, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 4QP

Inspection dates 13–14 September 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students' attainment at the end of Year 11 is above average. Given their starting points, students make good progress in their learning between Years 7 and 11. In some subjects, such as English and humanities, their achievement is outstanding.
- Much of the teaching in the school is good and some is outstanding.
- The excellent behaviour of students makes a significant contribution to a harmonious school community.
- Students are extremely well cared for. As a result, they feel very safe and report that incidents of bullying are extremely rare.
- The high expectations of senior leaders and governors are evident in the challenging targets set for students. The management of performance is rigorous. Targeted professional development is being used to drive improvement in teaching and students' achievement.
- Systems of monitoring and evaluation by school leaders and governors are robust and a clear plan is in place to drive improvement.
- The sixth form is good. Students are taught well and make good progress, attaining above average standards.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not consistently strong enough over time across all subjects for it to be judged outstanding.
- Students are not making rapid and sustained progress in some subjects, including mathematics. In science, the progress made by students is not yet good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 50 lessons, taught by 50 teachers, of which five were joint observations with members of staff.
- An inspector made a number of short visits to lessons with the school’s special educational needs coordinator to focus specifically on the support for disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- Meetings were held with students, members of the governing body and school staff, including the headteacher, senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors received five parent and carer responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also analysed the results of Year 7 and Year 11 parental questionnaires undertaken by the senior leadership team in November 2011.
- Inspectors reviewed the 70 staff questionnaires returned during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, including students’ books, and looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, records related to the behaviour and safety of students, attendance, and assessment data.

Inspection team

Peter Sanderson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Helen Blanchard

Additional inspector

Neil Gillespie

Additional inspector

Mary Myatt

Additional inspector

Joanna Peach

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Gillingham School is a larger than average secondary school.
- Nearly all students are White British. The proportion of students whose first language is not English is well below average.
- The proportion of students at school action and the proportion supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below that found in most schools.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate the small minority of teaching that requires improvement and improve the overall quality of teaching from good to outstanding in order to further raise students' achievement, particularly in mathematics and science by sharing the best practice to ensure that:
 - all teachers make effective use of data to plan and deliver lessons that are challenging for all students
 - students are consistently provided with activities which engage them actively in their learning and develop their independent learning skills
 - all teachers use questioning to challenge students effectively and to promote their higher-order thinking skills
 - all lessons are delivered at a fast and efficient pace to maximise learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The percentage of Year 11 students attaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, has been consistently above the national average. The percentage of students attaining the English Baccalaureate is well above average. Given students' starting points at the beginning of Year 7, this represents good progress in their learning.
- All groups of students, including those with disabilities or with special educational needs, make similar good progress. The additional funding for those students eligible for the pupil premium has been spent effectively by the school on in-class support from teaching assistants and out of classroom interventions. As a result, this group of students is making at least good progress.
- Outstanding achievement in some subjects such as English and humanities has been maintained since the previous inspection. Students made outstanding progress in a high percentage of lessons observed in these subjects during this inspection. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson on *Romeo and Juliet*, students showed an extremely high level of engagement and interest in the text. Through the teacher's very effective use of paired and group work, students made excellent progress in their understanding of the causes and consequences of conflict.
- Year 11 examination results in mathematics in 2010 and 2011 indicated that students made broadly average progress in this subject. However, improved unvalidated Year 11 examination results in 2012 indicate that these students made good progress. Lesson observations undertaken during this inspection indicate that achievement in mathematics is now good.
- Year 11 science examination results dipped in 2011, and the progress made by students was below the national average. Improved results in 2012 and lesson observations undertaken during this inspection indicate that progress in science is now average and improving, but is not yet good.
- Over each of the past three years, an above average percentage of students has attained five or more A* to G GCSE grades and all students have attained at least one GCSE pass grade. This is evidence of the school's inclusive ethos.
- The percentage of students leaving school and entering employment, education or training is well above the national average.
- The sixth form is highly inclusive, admitting students with a broad range of abilities and learning needs. Attainment at the end of Year 12 is above average and the percentage of students continuing to follow courses from Year 12 into Year 13 is similar to the national average. Attainment at the end of Year 13 is above that seen nationally.
- Given their starting points, the achievement of students in the sixth form is good. There is some variation in students' achievement between subjects, but these gaps are closing.

The quality of teaching is good

- Much of the teaching across the school is good, and some is outstanding, enabling students to make good progress in both Years 7 to 11 and the sixth form.
- In the best lessons, teachers use their high levels of expertise to good effect to foster excellent learning habits and to develop students' resilience and independence. Regular assessment ensures that these teachers know their students well and set work that is pitched at the right level. These lessons are typically delivered at a demanding pace, and teachers use questioning extremely well to help students improve their thinking skills and test out what they have understood.
- In the large majority of lessons, teachers made effective use of a range of practical activities and a variety of high-quality resources to engage and motivate students. In these lessons, students were active participants in their learning.

- Teachers are provided with clear and helpful information regarding the learning needs of those students with disabilities or special educational needs. A range of teaching strategies is used to support these students. Amongst the most effective of these are in-class support by specially trained teaching assistants and small-group teaching.
- In lessons where teaching was less effective, there was a tendency for teachers to over-direct proceedings. Teachers talked for too long and tasks were not sufficiently well matched to the ability of students. This slowed the pace of learning and limited opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills.
- In some lessons, questioning is only used to check students' knowledge, and answers only require one or two words. Opportunities are missed to delve deeper to fully explore students' understanding.
- The school has a strong focus on developing students' language and communication skills. Consequently, students' literacy development is planned for and promoted well in most lessons. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics lesson on probability, students were encouraged to read the novel *Holes* and they were also directed to the mathematics reading trail in the library.
- Students know their targets and how well they are doing. Their work is marked regularly and they are given helpful advice about how to move from one level or grade to another.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and the is excellent promotion across a range of subjects. For example, a Year 12 psychology lesson on Milgram's electric shock experiment that explored people's obedience to authority figures even when it conflicted with their personal conscience, and a Year 8 lesson on homelessness, explored moral issues extremely well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' behaviour is exemplary. Behaviour in lessons and around the school reflects the school's high expectations regarding student conduct and behaviour. The school is very successful in enabling students to develop as responsible individuals who treat each other with respect and courtesy. Relationships at all levels are excellent and students say they enjoy opportunities to take responsibility, for example as members of the school council.
- Students spoke very positively about behaviour in lessons and around the school site, and they also stated that they felt extremely safe in school. They know about the different forms of bullying and say that bullying is very rare. As one student said, 'Everyone is made to feel welcome at the school.' When any incident of bullying does occur it is dealt with promptly and effectively. Students demonstrate an informed understanding of how to avoid the risks that they might face. For example, they were clear about potential hazards associated with the use of the internet and substance abuse.
- The parents' and carers' questionnaires provided by the school indicated that those surveyed were extremely positive about students' behaviour and safety. Responses from staff were also overwhelmingly positive about students' behaviour and safety.
- Attendance is broadly average and improving, and students are extremely punctual to school in the morning and to lessons during the school day.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and members of the governing body provide the school with clear, purposeful leadership. They have high expectations, reflected in challenging targets, and are clearly focused on providing a high-quality education for all students. This vision is shared by the whole school community, and all staff completing the staff questionnaire indicated they were proud to be a member of the school.
- Equality of opportunity is at the centre of this inclusive school's work. This is evident in the effective tracking and intervention systems that ensure that all groups of students make

similar good progress. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated and this is evident in the courtesy and respect that both staff and students demonstrate for each other.

- Senior and middle leaders monitor teaching well and lesson observations clearly identify strengths and weakness in teaching. Professional development opportunities such as peer observation and training are used to drive improvements in teaching. However, the impact of this work is not consistent across all departments, leading to some variation in the quality of teaching and students' achievement between subjects.
 - Systems of monitoring and evaluation are robust and school leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of improvement. A good plan is in place to drive improvement. The performance management of teachers is rigorous and is used appropriately to support teacher development and inform salary progression.
 - The school's outstanding curriculum meets students' needs extremely well. A broad range of academic courses is available to students in Key Stage 4. This is enhanced through a range of vocational courses that are well tailored to meet individual student needs. A range of both academic and vocational courses in the sixth form at both A and GCSE level ensure that the needs of a broad range of students are met. An excellent range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities makes an extremely positive contribution to students' sporting, social and cultural development.
 - The local authority provides a relatively light touch level of support for this good school.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - the governing body has a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provides leaders and managers with an appropriate level of support and challenge
 - the governing body works closely with senior leaders to ensure that all safeguarding procedures, risk assessments and child protection arrangements are extremely robust and fully meet all requirements
 - financial resources are managed very well to support improved provision and good achievement for students.
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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	113882
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	395536

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,766
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	426
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Robson
Headteacher	Lorna Lyons
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2009
Telephone number	01747 822222
Fax number	01747 825263
Email address	office@gillingham.dorset.sch.uk

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