

# The Folkestone School for Girls

Coolinge, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 3RB

**Inspection dates** 11–12 October 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	N/A
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- The school has sustained high levels of attainment. Students excel through personal development and academic study; all achieve very well.
- Students, including those in the sixth form, love learning and derive great fulfilment from their work and the abundance of inspiring extra-curricular activities.
- The high expectations and excellent subject knowledge of staff underpin the outstanding teaching. Well-structured lessons provoke students' curiosity and develop their independence and creativity.
- Students are very committed to the continuous improvement of their school. They contribute to decision-making through a range of forums and lead many projects with maturity and flair.
- Students are extremely well cared for by staff. They thrive in the uplifting learning environment. Tolerance and mutual respect are ingrained. Students from all backgrounds work, play and socialise together very happily.
- Leadership and management are of high quality at every level. The standard is set by the exceptional leadership of the Executive Principal.
- The management of staff performance is very considered and provides clear accountability and excellent professional development.
- The Chair of the Governing Body is a shrewd leader and tenacious guardian of the quality of students' experiences.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Tailored guidance and first-rate provision ensure students achieve highly and are set to make the most of future opportunities.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons, of which four were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, staff, including senior and middle managers, and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors took account of the 86 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and to 80 questionnaires completed by staff.
- They observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including information about safeguarding, the school's own data on students' current progress and parents' and carers' views, its self-evaluation and records of monitoring in relation to teaching, students' behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Jacqueline White, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ogugua Okolo-Angus	Additional inspector
Omar Ganie	Additional inspector
Haydn Evans	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This average-sized, selective secondary school converted to academy status in February 2012. When its predecessor school, also known as the Folkestone School for Girls was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Most students are of White British heritage but there is a growing number from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium (those known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children) is below the national average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is well below average, as is the number supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school is well above the current government floor standard, which is the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.
- The school liaises with a local boys' grammar school to extend the range of sixth form courses available to students in both schools.
- The school has a partnership with Marsh Academy that was brokered by the local authority. The Executive Principal has led both establishments for almost five years but in the near future she will return to the full-time leadership of The Folkestone School for Girls.
- The school has specialisms in mathematics and computing and is a training school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching even further by extending staff expertise in:
  - questioning that encourages students to think deeply about complex ideas
  - ensuring group work always engrosses and challenges all students
  - creating opportunities for students to take a lead in learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Most students enter the school with above average attainment although there is a considerable range of ability in many classes. Students make rapid progress to secure high attainment that is consistently above average in nearly all subjects at the end of Years 11, 12 and 13. Results in the specialist subjects of mathematics and computing are outstanding.
- In 2011, staffing difficulties caused a dip in achievement in modern foreign languages. This has been recovered very quickly through new, invigorating leadership, a rapid improvement in teaching and precisely targeted support for students who are currently preparing for examinations. Students now thoroughly enjoy their languages lessons and the staff team of linguists is working cohesively and successfully to re-establish a trend of high attainment.
- The high number of students who progress from Year 11 to the sixth form, and those who join from other schools, relish the opportunities available to them. As they specialise in studying their favourite subjects they grow personally, attain highly and deepen their commitment to learning further.
- The school's assessment information is thoroughly reliable, uncomplicated and easily accessible. The progress of individuals and groups of students is monitored closely against ambitious targets. Any underperformance is detected swiftly and put right.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make excellent progress as do those who are eligible for funding through the pupil premium and those who are looked after. The growing number of students from minority ethnic groups, many of whom are Nepalese and from the local Ghurkha community, enjoy their work and achieve highly.
- Students' basic skills in literacy and numeracy are extremely well developed. Students are encouraged to have inquiring minds. They read widely for a range of purposes, formulate their own views and express them with confidence.
- Evidence, including 'Parent View', indicates that most parents and carers are delighted with the progress that their children make.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The warm, respectful and trusting relationships between students and staff are the bedrock upon which teachers and students strive together for the highest levels of learning.
- Teaching is consistently effective and, across subjects, much of it is outstanding. Teachers cater very successfully for students with particular needs, including disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- Mostly, teachers plan for the range of student ability in classes expertly. For example, in a Year 10 drama lesson observed, every student had an individual learning objective that was carefully linked to examination grade descriptors. Precise one-to-one interventions from the teacher ensured a sharp focus on targets and outstanding progress.
- Learning activities are varied, well sequenced and imaginative. Students have a clear understanding of what they are trying to achieve and excellent opportunities to evaluate their own and others' work.
- Teachers use questioning very well to encourage students to think deeply and grasp and shape complex ideas. In a small minority of lessons this is not the case.
- Students enjoy and benefit from working collaboratively. Very occasionally, group-work activities are too easy for the highest-attaining students, and openings for students to take the lead in learning, for example in discussions and through presentations, are missed.
- Teachers implement planned programmes of work with flair, originality and creativity. They are very responsive to students' progress and interests in adjusting the programmes.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is an integral part of school life and central to teaching practice and is therefore highly developed.
- The pupil premium is invested very well to ensure that teaching tackles any gaps in the

learning of those students eligible for this funding.

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

- Students' behaviour is exemplary around the site and in lessons. A strong work ethic and an obvious enjoyment of learning are reflected in students' above average and improving attendance.
- Students feel completely safe in school and valued as individuals. Their approach to risk is measured and underpinned by an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- Students speak knowledgeably about the dangers of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying such as racist and homophobic bullying. They are absolutely clear that any rare incidents are rooted out and tackled robustly.
- Students are proud of their school. They appreciate the excellent care and guidance they receive and reciprocate by contributing powerfully to the culture of mutual respect. They are very supportive of each other in lessons, showing a mature regard for each other's views and opinions.
- Sixth formers are excellent role models for younger students and superb ambassadors for the school.
- Staff and parents and carers are very positive about students' behaviour. In discussions, students reinforced the view that standards of behaviour are consistently high.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The success of every student is central to the Executive Principal's clear, determined and insightful leadership. She is very well supported by a highly effective senior leadership team. The tenacious pursuit of excellence drives leadership at every level.
- Staff understand their accountability for students' progress very well. The review of their performance by leaders is comprehensive and appropriately demanding, including in deciding whether teachers advance up the salary scale and are paid more.
- School self-evaluation is thorough, tough and accurate. The penetrating focus on improving teaching is uncompromising. The proportion of outstanding teaching has increased considerably since the school's previous inspection, demonstrating the school's outstanding capacity to sustain high standards.
- The curriculum meets students' needs extremely well. A distinctive feature is the internships that are taken up by all students in Year 11. These give students realistic experiences of the world of work and help them to make considered decisions about their future options.
- The promotion of equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's values. Discrimination is not tolerated. Carefully devised, high-quality support helps students to do as well as they possibly can.
- The school is outward looking and keenly committed to supporting improvement in its local community. The long-standing, mutually beneficial partnership with Marsh Academy has enriched students' experiences in both schools.
- The school maintains a highly productive partnership with parents and carers. Parents' and carers' views are sought frequently and acted upon. A very well designed online 'learning gateway' enables all parents and carers to view their children's reports and receive up-to-date information about attendance, behaviour and homework.
- Safeguarding procedures are tight and child protection procedures and training meet all current requirements.
- The school does not receive any support from the local authority. When governors and senior leaders feel it is necessary, they make judicious choices about buying in expertise from private consultants.
- **The governance of the school is highly effective:**
  - Governors are sharply focused on maintaining high standards and meticulous in meeting their statutory duties. They are well trained with a wide range of expertise that is applied

effectively to monitoring the work of the school.

- Governors work closely with senior leaders and ask challenging questions about the quality and impact of their work. They are very well informed, particularly about the quality of teaching across subjects, and ensure any underperformance is dealt with rigorously.
- Governors manage resources efficiently, including pupil premium funding, and ensure students' well-being and achievement come first in securing value for money.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137837
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	403717

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1058
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	236
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Thorne
<b>Principal</b>	Tracy Luke
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01303 251125
<b>Fax number</b>	01303 258084
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