

Northfleet School for Girls

Hall Road, Northfleet, DA11 8AQ

Inspection dates 26–27 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well throughout the school, including those in the sixth form. Although many students arrive at the school with standards that are below national expectations for their age group, they make good progress. By the end of Key Stages 4 and 5, they achieve broadly average standards.
- The sixth form is good. Students’ achievement is improving steadily and those following work-related courses make good progress.
- Teaching is good overall and, in some lessons, it is outstanding. The best teaching makes good links with real-life situations to make the lessons interesting for students.
- Support for students who are disabled or have special educational needs is good. Regular checks of students’ work, personal support and encouragement when needed ensure they make more progress than expected.
- Students behave well, have good attitudes to learning and feel safe. The majority of parents agree.
- Fixed term exclusions and absence have reduced significantly since the last inspection. The school has effective procedures, including rewards for punctuality and good attendance. Significant improvement in students’ attendance in the sixth form is due to careful revision of the curriculum to make sure it meets their needs.
- A strong feature of the school is the high quality support and guidance provided by the headteacher and her team for all students. There are also sensitive structures in place for those who are at risk of underperforming.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The teaching in a minority of lessons does not provide all students, particularly the more able, with opportunities to initiate their own learning, ask questions and develop their thinking skills.
- The use of progress information to inform teachers’ planning is not always sufficiently robust in every lesson to ensure that the needs of all students are met. There are missed opportunities to share good practice amongst all colleagues.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons and were accompanied by senior leaders for half of the lessons.
- Year 11 students were on work experience but samples of their work were analysed.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students; the Chair of Governors; school staff, including senior and middle leaders, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors also took account of the 23 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and undertaking the inspection. They also consulted the school’s own survey of parents’ views, completed in 2012.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school’s own information on students’ progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Mary Myatt, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Jennifer Barker	Additional inspector
Roger Parry	Additional inspector
David Scott	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized secondary school and is a specialist college for business and enterprise. In July 2011, it became part of a Cooperative Learning Trust and its partners include, among others, the Co-op, Age Concern, North-West Kent College and the University of Greenwich.
- The largest group of students come from a White British background and the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is slightly higher than the national average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is average.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs or who receive support at school action/school action plus is above average.
- The school has recently undergone an extensive rebuilding programme.
- The senior leadership team has been recently restructured.
- The school meets the current government's floor target which sets minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, in order to raise achievement still further, by:
 - providing students, especially the more able, with more opportunities to work on problems and dilemmas where they share ideas, make links across the curriculum, and produce extended writing projects
 - raising teachers' expectations in using more probing questioning in order to deepen students' understanding.
- Strengthen the impact of leaders including the governing body in driving improvement by:
 - ensuring that tracking and monitoring information for different groups of students is applied more rigorously in planning, so that all staff create opportunities for all students
 - enhancing systems to share best practice in teaching, both within and across departments.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The progress of all students, including those in the sixth form and those with special educational needs, is good. Students enter the school with levels that are below average. By the time they reach the end of Key Stage 4, their attainment is broadly average.
- Progress in mathematics at Key Stage 4 has improved, as it has in English, following a dip in 2010. Students' achievement has improved across a range of subjects, but there is still some variation in how well they achieve across subjects, especially in the sixth form. Post-16 students do less well in mathematics and design technology than in business and media studies, for example.
- Standards since the last inspection have risen for all students, including those in the sixth form. This is as a result of careful monitoring and intervention for those who are not on track to reach their potential. Current information about students' progress demonstrates that any remaining variations in Key Stage 4 are being rapidly ironed out, particularly for those taking core science and for those students eligible for support through the use of pupil premium funding.
- The curriculum has been reviewed and revised in the sixth form, resulting in improved retention rates. Achievement is good overall, with the majority of students making good progress in their learning from their below average starting points.
- Progress across year groups in a wide range of subjects is consistently strong. Evidence from conversations with students, and from looking at their work, shows that they are achieving well.
- The school is working to make sure high quality speaking, reading and writing are developed across the curriculum. Opportunities through the school's partners in their Co-operative Learning Trust mean that students have the chance to relate their literacy skills to real-life contexts. This ensures that students are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good, particularly where it makes links with other curriculum areas. As a result, most students, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, and those eligible for the pupil premium, make good progress and achieve well over time.
- Consistent focus on improving the quality of teaching is having an impact on students' learning, progress and achievement. The school is engaged in several training initiatives to develop the range and confidence of teachers' skills, and these are having a positive impact.
- In the best lessons, students work on projects which they say are relevant to them and where they are able to contribute original ideas; teachers have high expectations and expect students to engage with difficult ideas and to explore them through high quality discussion.
- In most lessons, teachers listen to, carefully observe and skilfully question students in order to reshape tasks and explanations to improve learning. Students are given many chances to use the skills they have learnt and to work together. There are, however, some missed opportunities for building on students' responses and challenging their thinking.
- The climate for learning in most lessons is very positive and students are interested and engaged. In the best lessons, teachers use students' responses and questions to develop understanding. Nevertheless, in some lessons, teachers talk for too long and students lose concentration.
- Most teachers assess students' learning and progress regularly and accurately. While many provide helpful feedback on what students need to do to improve, this is not always done consistently. A small amount of teaching does not take sufficient account of students' prior learning to inform planning.
- The focus on literacy across the curriculum is developing students' speaking and listening skills well. For example, students in a Year 9 English lesson were fully engaged in role play as a

newspaper editor, and in a geography lesson groups were using persuasive arguments in a debate about immigration. This resulted in students making good progress as they considered dilemmas and worked collaboratively to reach their conclusions.

- Training to develop teachers' confidence in providing challenging work for more able students is having an impact on students' engagement and achievement. The best practice in these initiatives is not always shared across all departments.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' attitudes to learning are positive and behaviour is consistently good. The school deals effectively with the few instances of bullying. Considerable effort has been made by the headteacher and the wider team to include parents in discussions about how to keep their children safe and to have a positive attitude to learning.
- There is a very positive atmosphere in the school. All staff, including the headteacher, know the names and circumstances of the students. This creates a school culture which is open and inclusive.
- Students are aware of how to keep safe and of different forms of bullying, such as racist and homophobic name-calling. The school has used the personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons in Year 7 to signpost how to support students who are upset or experiencing problems.
- Behaviour is managed consistently well. Those students who have behavioural needs are given additional support through a well-focused pastoral system. The local authority has provided appropriate training, to improve the behaviour of a minority of students.
- Attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection, particularly so in the sixth form. This is the result of careful analysis of the reasons for poor attendance on the part of a small cohort of students. In the sixth form, it is the result of reshaping the curriculum so that it meets the needs of students.
- Very sensitive programmes and additional support, both within the school and from other agencies, have secured impressive improvement in behaviour over time.

The leadership and management are good

- The high aspirations of the headteacher are shared fully by the leadership team and members of the governing body. Together, they have been responsible for addressing all of the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. In particular, they have reduced the number of fixed-term exclusions and improved attendance.
- The senior leadership team has recently been restructured. This has resulted in a renewed focus on securing high quality practice across all departments.
- The headteacher is well supported by other senior staff and governors. Their ability and willingness to collaborate with wider partnerships is resulting in higher quality teaching. They are taking steps to ensure that high level learning is evident in every lesson and they recognise that there is more that needs to be done to secure even greater improvement.
- There is a clear-sighted focus on raising standards through strong leadership of teaching. The headteacher and the governing body provide clear direction and carefully structured support.
- Accurate monitoring and the effective management of staff performance, together with well-considered training programmes, are closely linked to the school's development plan and the needs of the staff. However, not all staff are analysing progress information to plan opportunities for students to maximise their learning.
- The school is drawing on its relationships with the local authority, the Gravesham partnership and high quality initiatives such as 'Every Lesson Counts' in order to develop strategies which have an impact on students' learning. While there is much sharing of good practice and peer observations, it is not yet consistently applied across all subject areas.
- The curriculum provides well-organised and effective opportunities for learning, for all groups of students. In the sixth form, there is now an increased offer of vocational courses and the curriculum has been reorganised to meet students' needs. This has resulted in an increase in

the number of students staying on into Year 13.

- The wider links with partnerships such as the Dementia Project provide the chance for students to put their learning into context. In the Health and Social Care Studies, students focus on the National Dementia Strategy. As part of their course, students support activities coordinated by the local Alzheimer's and Dementia Support Services.
- Leaders promote equality and tackle any discrimination well. They strive effectively to close gaps in achievement of different groups of learners and this is reflected in their success with those students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Initiatives such as RiskIt weeks are creating the conditions for staff and students to work in new ways. The focus on trying new things with technology, and, for example, allowing students to teach teachers, means that staff and students are becoming more open to new ways of working.
- Students have plenty of chances, both in lessons and in activities outside school hours, to develop their social skills and independence. These include 'Northfleet Tuesdays', where activities for students and parents give them the chance to develop new skills alongside one another. There is a breakfast club and 'Relax and Revise' sessions, which are valued by students, as they make a difference to their enjoyment and achievement.
- The school provides opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are some very good examples of this, where high quality collaboration and sensitive discussion of subjects such as immigration is taking place in the best lessons. Students have plenty of chances to engage with the wider community. For example, Year 12 students are working on a project to improve a derelict area near the school. This is due to be broadcast by a national television station.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - undertakes its statutory duties, including safeguarding and financial management well
 - has a clear-sighted view of the strengths of the school and the areas for development
 - understands, and takes sufficient account of, the data relating to students' performance
 - holds the headteacher and senior leaders to account through rigorous performance management of the headteacher, and through regular contributions to curriculum meetings.

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	118788
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	401787

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1005
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clive Brooke
Headteacher	Julie Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 February 2010
Telephone number	01474 831020
Fax number	01474 335058
Email address	info@northfleetgirls.kent.sch.uk

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