

# The Duke of York's Royal Military School

Guston, Dover, Kent, CT15 5EQ

## Inspection dates

7–8 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b> <b>2</b>
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.

- The headteacher, leaders and staff work well together. The school has a clear sense of direction firmly rooted in raising achievement.
- Senior staff have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Previously slow school improvement has accelerated rapidly and students are now achieving well.
- These improvements are also reflected in the sixth form which is now good.
- Teaching is mostly good and some is outstanding. Teachers make clear to students what is expected of them. This helps them to know how to reach their targets, especially those on examination courses.
- Students' progress is checked systematically. Staff use the information to identify any students falling behind. Leaders check that the right steps are taken so that students catch up.
- There is a strong sense of tradition and community. Students of all backgrounds get on well. Behaviour is usually good and is exemplary at school gatherings.
- The close and supportive culture between the boarding and day-school aspects of students' lives makes a strong contribution to their welfare, learning and personal development.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although teaching is improving quickly, some still requires improvement. There is not enough outstanding teaching. Some teachers fail to mark students' work regularly. Key literacy errors are not always corrected.
- Not enough students are achieving exceptionally well. Activities in lessons are not always well planned and managed to meet the needs of all students, especially the more able.
- Although the leadership of the sixth form is now good, students' performance has been inconsistent and requires improvement. Previous guidance did not ensure that all students are well suited to their courses.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons, many of which were jointly observed with senior staff.
- Discussions were held with students, the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and school staff, including senior and middle leaders. Telephone discussions were held with a small number of parents.
- Inspectors considered 37 responses from Parent View, the parents' on-line survey.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school, including two whole-school gatherings. They looked at the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, minutes of meetings and other records and policy documents. They checked safeguarding procedures. Students' books were scrutinised.
- Although this is a boarding school, boarding was not part of this inspection. Boarding was last inspected in March 2011 and judged good.
- This is the school's first full inspection following a monitoring inspection in September 2011.

## Inspection team

Daniel Towl, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gill Carter

Additional Inspector

Roger Fenwick

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Duke of York's Royal Military School opened as an academy in September 2010 from its predecessor status as an independent boarding school. The predecessor school had strong links with the military, stretching back 200 years. The academy has maintained its military links and the well-established traditions in military music and military ceremonial activities.
- There are 438 students on roll. All students are boarders. There are 105 students in the sixth form.
- Three quarters of students are from families that have close military connections, including parents who are currently on active service.
- A new headteacher took up post in September 2012 and there have been several recent staff changes.
- Students come from many different backgrounds. The largest group is White British, but other main groups include Nepalese and those with other Asian backgrounds.
- A higher-than-average proportion of students does not speak English as a first language.
- A higher-than-average proportion of students is identified as requiring additional help. A smaller-than-average proportion of students has a statement of special educational needs.
- About half of the students are in receipt of the service premium. This is funding for students who have parents on active military service. It is money that is mainly used to support students' social and emotional well-being.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Increase the proportion of students who make exceptional progress and reach the highest grades in GCSE and A-level examinations.
- Rapidly move all teaching to good and increase the number of outstanding lessons in all parts of the school by ensuring:
  - that learning is brisk and that work is set that consistently stretches and challenges students of all abilities, but especially the more able
  - that all teachers regularly mark students' classwork and consistently check students' accuracy in literacy, for example spelling, punctuation and presentation.
- Ensure that advice and guidance for students about courses to choose and careers to consider are of high quality and lead to all students in the sixth form being well matched to their courses and able to achieve well.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with average attainment. In the last two years they have done well in GCSE examinations. They make better than expected progress in English and mathematics. Although students now make good progress overall, not enough reach the higher A\* and A grades in GCSE examinations. The school does not routinely enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- A-level pass rates have been average for the last two years. Attainment in the sixth form has been variable between subjects and between AS and A levels. Senior staff are aware that this aspect of the sixth form requires improvement. The reasons for the variable results have been carefully analysed.
- A range of good initiatives is now in place to raise the quality of provision in the sixth form. Teaching and students' sixth form performance are improving quickly. The school's accurate monitoring of students' progress shows that most are now making good progress and on track to reach their suitably challenging target grades. All students leaving in 2012 entered higher education or employment.
- Students make their best and most consistent progress in Years 10 and 11, especially in English and mathematics, when they work on their GCSE courses. This reflects a pattern of stronger teaching in these year groups.
- Students who are entitled to additional support through the service premium money make good progress. Many students have previously been to several schools and have had a disrupted education. There is no overall difference between their performance and that of others in the school.
- Some of the additional funding has been used to make careful and detailed assessments of students' reading and mathematics skills when students arrive at the school. This has led to their receiving well-focused and effective support which ensures that any gaps in learning are closed as quickly as possible.
- Students develop good speaking and listening skills. This supports good learning because they are confident in joining in during discussions and asking and answering questions. Students' writing develops well in its content but spelling, punctuation and neatness are not consistently good across different classes and subjects.
- Students whose first language is not English make good progress, as do those that the school has identified as needing additional support to prevent them from falling behind. Students from Asian and Nepalese backgrounds make good progress.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the monitoring visit in September 2011. It has improved more quickly since the new headteacher and senior leaders have added rigour to the way in which both the progress of students and the quality of lessons are checked. Teaching is stronger in lessons where students are following GCSE and A-level courses.
- Students are confident that teaching is improving. Most parents responding to the on-line questionnaire were happy with the quality of teaching.
- Students who require additional help are well supported in lessons with extra adult help. This support makes sure that they get on well and make good progress. Service premium money is used effectively to ensure that additional help can continue in the boarding houses during the supervised homework sessions. Regular supervised homework in the boarding houses makes an important contribution to students' achievements.
- Improved analysis of students' progress provides all teachers with a clear picture of how well their students are doing. Most teachers successfully use the information to make sure they plan

work at the right level. Students welcome the extra information they receive about their levels.

- In the best lessons teachers carefully plan a set of tasks that leads students to learn at a brisk pace. In these lessons students develop their skills through a good balance of activities. These include students observing different ways to solve problems, developing ideas through discussion and working in groups and independently. This range of activity successfully helps students to remain alert and responsive.
- Not all teachers make sure that the activities in lessons give the right amount of challenge for all students. Higher ability students are not always stretched enough, and those who need extra help cannot always keep up where no additional adult is available and get the most from their tasks.
- Relationships between staff and students are respectful. Students' opinions and answers are valued and this makes a strong contribution to learning. It encourages students to debate and discuss issues and this in turn develops their understanding of what they are learning.
- The quality and frequency of marking are variable across subjects. Not all teachers give enough attention to correcting students' errors in spelling and punctuation or to challenging poor presentation of work.

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

- Students are respectful, courteous and get on well together. The school has a strong sense of community. Attitudes to learning are good and disruption to lessons rare. A very few students were excluded in the last year.
- Students told inspectors that behaviour has improved and that sanctions are applied fairly and consistently. The excellent links between the boarding and day aspects of the school make a strong contribution to establishing all-round high expectations of students. Continuity of care between the boarding and day school contributes effectively to students' safety and well-being.
- Students are pleased that the new headteacher has taken a very strong line on all forms of bullying. They know that it is not tolerated. There are few incidents of bullying.
- Students know about different types of bullying, including cyber bullying. In a personal, social and health education lesson, Year 7 students considered different ways in which cyber bullying could take place and discussed how they would deal with it. However, a few parents expressed a concern about the way the school deals with bullying.
- Attendance is high and punctuality is good. The helpful short gap between lessons ensures that students have ample time to move around the large site. Students move purposefully and sensibly around the school and are often engaged in informal conversation with each other.
- Students respond well to their military ceremonial and sporting activities, strong traditions of the school. Students take this aspect of their school life very seriously. Their behaviour in, and commitment to, whole-school activities, such as chapel services, are outstanding.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The new headteacher has made a big difference to the school. The rate of school improvement has quickened substantially, including in the sixth form. Leaders at all levels have a clear determination to play their part in raising the performance of the school. They know what they have to do and are held to account for their work.
- The vast majority of staff who returned their questionnaires about the management of the school were highly supportive. A small number of staff said they would like more training. A variety of different types of training has been used successfully to raise the performance of staff. This includes support for individual teachers and whole staff training.
- Students welcome the approach of the headteacher. They like seeing him around the school and taking an interest. They feel he knows them as individuals.

- The headteacher and senior leaders have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know the students well and have a good knowledge of where teaching is good and where it needs improving.
  - Rigorous methods are used to check how well students are doing, pinpointing where progress is not good enough. This information is used rigorously as part of the management of teachers' performance.
  - Middle leaders have played an important role in successfully improving the management of behaviour, checking students' academic progress and improving teaching. Middle leaders told inspectors they feel valued, supported and enabled to do their job. Heads of department in the key subjects of English, mathematics and science are good role models.
  - Strong and effective links have been made with other local schools. The links have strengthened the capacity of leaders and managers to continue the school's rapid improvement. This brings benefits to students in their learning and progress.
  - Students who require additional help, including those whose first language is not English, have well-managed support. Much attention is given to ensuring that students' reading skills are good enough to read confidently the books, resources and other written materials they are given in their lessons. There are examples of students making outstanding progress in their reading in a short time.
  - Service premium funding has been spent appropriately to support students' academic and personal needs, particularly those of students whose parents are on active military service. Effective additional support ensures that students have seamless care and support between their school and boarding lives.
  - The curriculum is meeting the needs of most of its students. Some new vocational courses have been introduced. This has broadened students' options at GCSE and A level.
  - A few students are not currently well matched to their courses in the sixth form. Senior leaders have already put in place a programme of events to provide better quality advice to students about courses and careers. Plans are in place to broaden the sixth form curriculum choices in the near future, using already established links with a nearby school.
  - The school has a very wide range of well-attended additional and out-of-school activities of high quality, including extended visits, sport and special ceremonial occasions. These activities play a very important and highly effective part in helping students develop into confident and mature young people. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
  - Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The governing body has been an important driving force in speeding up the rate of improvement since the last monitoring inspection, including the need to improve teaching. The governors have overseen significant changes to the leadership and management of the school, including the appointment of a new headteacher and the establishment of a new leadership team. This has ensured that improvements have been much more rapid. Governors are acutely aware of the importance of performance management of senior staff and all teachers as a process to raise the performance of the whole school. Governors have a good understanding of budgetary matters, including the use of the service premium. They work closely with senior leaders and are quickly improving their knowledge of school performance data and safeguarding through training.
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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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136177
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC023666
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	399793

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	438
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	105
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	438
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Geoff Soar
<b>Principal</b>	Chris Russell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01304245024
<b>Fax number</b>	01304245019
<b>Email address</b>	admin.office@doyrms.com



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