

Chatham Grammar School for Girls

Rainham Road, Chatham, Kent, ME5 7EH

Inspection dates 29–30 November 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and students

This is a good school

- Students' achievement is good. They make good progress and results are improving at both GCSE and A level. GCSE attainment is significantly above average and at A level results are above average. Achievement in the English Baccalaureate is above average and currently many more students are studying this combination of subjects than previously.
- Students feel exceptionally safe and their behaviour around the school is excellent. Their conduct, manners and punctuality are exemplary. They are courteous to adults, welcoming to visitors and respectful of one another.
- Teaching in most subjects, including English and mathematics, is good, with examples of some outstanding teaching.
- The headteacher and governing body have a clear vision for the direction of the school. Their planning is focused sharply on actions to improve students' achievement and the quality of teaching further.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress in their studies. Relationships and the behaviour of the students are also good and this adds to their sixth form experience.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in science is not as high as in the key subjects of mathematics and English.
- Although teaching is generally good, it is not consistent throughout the school and a few lessons require improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 43 lessons, of which a small number were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, staff, including senior and middle managers, and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors held meetings with representatives of the governing body, local authority, staff and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 73 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and of 42 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

Haydn Evans, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Helen Hutchings	Additional inspector
Peter Lawley	Additional inspector
George Rayner	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This average-sized, selective secondary school for girls began taking boys in the sixth form in September 1997.
- Most students are of White British heritage but there is a growing number from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of students supported by the extra funding known as the student 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 proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.
- The school does not use any alternative provision. It collaborates with other local schools to extend the range of sixth form courses available to students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or better in all subjects to help students to accelerate their progress, particularly in science, by:
 - developing teachers' use of questions to ensure that students of all ability are fully engaged and challenged in lessons
 - ensuring that students' tasks enable them to be actively involved in their learning
 - making middle leaders more accountable for the quality of teaching within their departments
 - sharing the most effective practice more widely across the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of students is good

- Students join the school with above average attainment. They make good progress throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 so that GCSE results are consistently well above national averages. The school does pursue a policy of early entry for GCSE. However, this applies only to the year nine cohort who are entered for Statistics.
- The recent improvement in results is closely linked to the raised expectations that senior leaders have of teaching and achievement. The school's tracking data indicate that students are on course to maintain these improvements next year.
- Achievement across all subjects in the English Baccalaureate is well above average with the exception of science where students' progress is satisfactory rather than good.
- Students read widely and often. They regularly carry books to read when there is an opportunity. In one lesson, all students were observed retrieving information from a number of complex written narratives placed strategically around the room, and using the information to identify the age of a cartoon displayed on the interactive whiteboard.
- Students' high levels of literacy provide a platform for sustained progress in developing knowledge and understanding quickly across the curriculum. In lessons, they work effectively together, learning from sharing and talking through their ideas. For example, in a lesson when students were learning about human development indicators, they quickly analysed text and summarised it in a highly condensed format.
- The school has made effective use of the additional funding received through the student premium to ensure the learning and progress of groups of students, including those who are eligible for free school meals. The provision made ensures that the progress of all groups is at least good and in line with the other students in the school, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- The above average attainment, particularly in mathematics, English and other Baccalaureate subjects, enables students to progress successfully to the sixth form. Their continuing good progress through the sixth form effectively enables most students to progress to universities of their choice.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in most subjects is good, with examples of some outstanding teaching. As a result, most students and groups of students currently on roll in the school, including those for whom the student premium provides support as well as those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well.
- Teachers build strong relationships with their students so that lessons are enjoyable because there is a sense of shared learning. Teachers are prepared to go the 'extra mile' to deepen students' knowledge and understanding, for example, by giving guidance at lunchtime and after school. Because teachers have high expectations that students should achieve well, they help students to become independent and take responsibility for their own progress, for example, through homework tasks that require students to research issues for themselves.
- In the best lessons, teachers listen to and observe students carefully. They skilfully question and challenge them in order to develop explanations to improve their learning and understanding. Students are encouraged to be active in their learning, collaborating with their peers. For example, in a mathematics lesson where students carried out an experiment to find out the probability of a particular letter in their name, they quickly understood the difference between theoretical and experimental probability. However, learning is not always practical enough to consolidate students' understanding of the most challenging theoretical concepts and in a few lessons, questioning is too reliant on short responses which do not challenge students enough.
- Students were able to demonstrate that reading, writing and communication are taught effectively. In a Year 10 geography lesson, they had to assimilate information about the alpine

environment and rapidly write a précis using a quarter of the number of words under pressure of a short time.

- Teachers give students good advice and guidance about the quality of their work, both orally and in written comments. Consequently, students know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve, so enhancing their confidence and independence as learners.
- Teachers use well-designed homework tasks that are closely matched to the students' individual needs, including those of the most able, so that they are fully stretched and challenged very well in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of students are outstanding

- Students have excellent attitudes to learning, as shown in lessons when they have to collaborate and plan and manage the completion of tasks independently of the teacher. This makes a strong contribution to the improving achievement across the school. In these instances, teachers are effective and consistent in setting their expectations for behaviour and effort, and this contributes to an exceptionally positive climate for learning.
- Parents and carers, staff and students have unreservedly positive opinions about both behaviour and safety at the school.
- Students' behaviour around the school is excellent. Their conduct, manners and punctuality are admirable. They are courteous to adults, welcoming to visitors and respectful of one another.
- Students are fully aware of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying, feel it is not a threat in their school and feel confident that any concerns they might have would be dealt with effectively by the adults at the school. Students feel safe at the school and parents and carers agree with this. Students benefit from very clear guidance on how to keep themselves and others safe, including in relation to e-safety.
- Students show their highly positive attitudes in their excellent punctuality and attendance.
- Sixth form students have mature attitudes, good manners and act as excellent role models for younger students. On one occasion, during a lesson changeover, a sixth former took the time to hold a heavy door open so that a number of her peers could pass through. The courtesy demonstrated was gratefully and respectfully received by all of them.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school. The changes already made, for example the introduction of an accountability based performance management system, underline an uncompromising approach to maintain the highest levels of achievement and personal development for all students. Their success is seen in the improving pattern of attainment.
- Teaching is underpinned by accurate monitoring, effective performance management and professional development which are closely matched to the needs of the school and staff. Senior leaders have identified areas for development and are intent on generating further improvement, for example, by coaching and training in questioning techniques.
- Self-evaluation is well structured and the school's improvement strategies are carefully planned. For example, staff have identified that students are capable of making even greater gains in their literacy skills and have introduced an approach to promote this across the curriculum.
- Governors and the headteacher systematically challenge senior leaders. As a result the quality of teaching and students' achievement are improving.
- The school's curriculum is well organised and changes have been made to make sure that students follow English Baccalaureate courses. This has had a positive impact on results. Curriculum enrichment includes a broad range of clubs, visits and residential visits that contribute well to the pupils' achievement and especially to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school works well with parents and carers, as demonstrated by the very positive response from Parent View showing that the overwhelming majority of parents and carers would recommend the school to others.

- The school's success in challenging discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity is seen in the good progress made by all groups of students.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors bring a range of expertise to their role, They are knowledgeable of their own performance through self-evaluation, as well as that of the school's, and are involved in training to ensure that they are able to hold the school to account. Governors share the senior team's vision for the school and, in particular, how teaching can be improved to raise levels of achievement for all. They reinforce this where they can by rewarding good teaching through salary progression. They have a clear vision for their role in school improvement and are well aware of the school's priorities in this respect. Governors oversee the efficient management of financial resources, with a clear aim of deploying staff and resources to most effectively meet the needs of the students at the school. They monitor the use of the pupil premium effectively in providing additional support, for example to participate in extra-curricular activities, so that the progress of looked after students and those known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to that of the rest of the school.

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 students' needs. This ensures that students 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 students' needs. Students 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 students 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	137389
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	403700

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

Type of school	Grammar
School category	Academy
Age range of students	11–18
Gender of students	Girls
Gender of students in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of students on the school roll	776
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wendy Purdy
Headteacher	Christine Probin
Date of previous school inspection	12 December 2007
Telephone number	01634 851262
Fax number	01634 571928
Email address	postbox@chathamgirlsgrammar.medway.sch.uk

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