

Wilmington Grammar School for Boys

Common Lane, Dartford, DA2 7DA

Inspection dates

5–6 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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

- The headteacher's clear and ambitious vision for the school, which is shared by all staff, has successfully brought about improvements in teaching and, as a result, students make good progress and achieve well.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, mark books conscientiously and set regular homework. As a result, much of the teaching is good and some is outstanding.
- Leaders, including the governors, know their school well and are clear about what needs to be done to improve still further.
- Students are proud of their school. They are courteous and polite and in their lessons they are keen to learn.
- The school has been very successful in planning a curriculum that meets the needs of all its students. This has meant that a large number have been able to pursue areas of interest to a higher level while others could catch up in subjects where they need additional support. The school's specialism in engineering is a popular option where students achieve particularly well.
- The sixth form is good. Students' achievement is good. They feel that they are taught well and appreciate the quality of the advice that they receive.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all leaders have a clear enough picture of the quality of teaching in their subject area and what needs to be done to improve it.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not make enough use of the information that they have on what students already know and understand to plan their lessons effectively.
- Not enough opportunities are provided for students to act upon the advice they are given when their work is returned to them.
- Students are not always encouraged to deepen their knowledge and understanding across all subjects through wider reading, particularly in the sixth form.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons in addition to making shorter visits to a number of classrooms. Six of these observations were made jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors looked at students’ books and discussed samples of their work. They also looked at the quality of the teachers’ marking and how this was helping students to improve.
- Inspectors met with groups of students to discuss their experience of the school and particularly their learning, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors discussed with a number of teachers the training and support that they have received and how this was helping them to improve their teaching.
- Inspectors reviewed a number of documents, including: the minutes of governor meetings; safeguarding procedures; behaviour and attendance records; documents about school review and improvement; and school records on performance management and teaching and learning, including lesson observations.
- Inspectors met with four members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, groups of school leaders and an education adviser who works with the school.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, inspectors took account of the 104 responses to the Parent View survey, and 41 questionnaires completed by members of staff.

Inspection team

Graham Tuck, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Christine Fogg	Additional inspector
Janet Morrison	Additional inspector
Roger Garrett	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a slightly smaller than average school with 241 students in the sixth form.
- The school selects from the top 25% of boys.
- The school converted to become an academy school in August 2011. When its predecessor school, also Wilmington Grammar School for Boys, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory overall.
- The school has a specialism in engineering.
- About one in 20 students is eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average.
- Students from minority ethnic groups make up a little under a quarter of the school's population which is in line with the national average.
- Approximately 3% of students speak English as an additional language, which is well below the national average.
- The percentage of students supported at school action is about half the national average. Less than 1% are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs, which is well below the national average.
- A few students attend schools in the Wilmington Consortium for a number of lessons a week so that they can study diploma courses that are not provided by the school. Some additional A-level courses are also taken by sixth form students at the nearby Wilmington Grammar School for Girls.
- 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 amount of teaching that is outstanding and thereby further improve students' achievement by:
 - ensuring that there is regular monitoring of teaching, particularly by subject leaders, and that findings are used to identify how teachers can further improve
 - ensuring that teachers make consistent use of information on students' prior achievement to plan their lessons so that all students are fully stretched and can make rapid progress
 - giving students more opportunities to learn from their teacher's marking
 - providing more opportunities for students to read widely to broaden their knowledge and understanding, particularly in the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with levels of attainment that are well above the national average. They make good progress in their learning throughout the school so that by the end of Year 11 all students attain five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including in English and mathematics. Rates of progress in English and mathematics are well above the national averages and, as a result, the percentage of grades awarded at A* and A is twice the national average in English and three times in mathematics.
- In 2012, achievement in languages, business studies and history was lower than expected. However, school leaders have successfully tackled this dip in performance and achievement in these areas is now much stronger. Students do well in many of their other GCSE subjects including science, geography and physical education.
- Three quarters of last year's Year 11 cohort took their GCSE mathematics examination for the first time at the end of Year 10; the remainder took it at the start of their final year, with the opportunity to resit the examination in the summer. The school uses this system to help motivate its students and to provide opportunities for a large number to take an additional qualification in advanced mathematics. Great care is taken by the school to ensure that students do not drop the subject until they achieve the grade that is expected of them. As a result, rates of progress in mathematics are exceptionally high.
- In the 2012 GCSE English examinations, students supported by the pupil premium attained as well as all other students when comparing their average point score in national assessments and all made the progress that was expected of them. In mathematics, these students attained about half a grade below that of all other students although all but one made the expected progress, which is much higher than the national average. Based on the school's reliable data, all of these students will make the expected rate of progress in English and mathematics this year. The effective targeting of pupil premium money, for example by employing additional staff to support students who are eligible with coaching and advice, has contributed towards this success.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make very good progress.
- Encouraged by teaching that frequently involves students in their learning through group and project work, achievement in the sixth form is good. The school has applied more realistic standards for entry into the sixth form this year, and as a result the percentage of students who complete their studies and achieve a qualification is set to rise to above the national average.
- Almost all the parents and carers who responded to the Parent View questionnaire agree that their child makes good progress in the school. This is also the view of the students who appreciate the rewards and incentives that they receive when they do well.
- Students are encouraged to read widely, for example through parents' reading evenings, and across a number of subjects projects are under way to encourage students to read from newspapers and other sources. The school recognises the need to develop this further, particularly in the sixth form, in order to broaden the students' subject knowledge and understanding.

The quality of teaching is good

- The positive relationship between students and their teachers is a strong feature of the school and helps to ensure that learning can take place in an atmosphere of mutual courtesy and respect.
- Teachers show good subject knowledge and share their enthusiasm with students who respond keenly and intelligently to the tasks they are given. Students are articulate and eager to discuss their ideas and their work. They learn the most when they work together, in pairs or in groups and share their conclusions with the class. In a Year 10 German lesson, students practised the

use of three tenses (past, present and future) by creating complex sentences in small groups and then sharing them with the rest of the class. As a result, all the students in the class understood how to construct the different tenses and had many good examples to use in their essays.

- Teachers frequently assess students' progress by questioning them on their understanding throughout the lesson, encouraging them to assess their own and one another's work, and addressing any areas of misunderstanding. Students know how to improve their work and are guided by the system of 'What works well' and 'Even better if' which they all appreciate. In some lessons, they are given time to respond to the teacher's guidance straight away. In a Year 8 English class, students were asked to look carefully through the teacher's marking and then to provide a response and this helped to clarify their understanding of how they could improve. As yet these opportunities are not being used consistently enough across the school.
- Teachers plan their work carefully and make good use of lesson objectives to encourage students to do their best. In better lessons, teachers use the information they have about students' achievement to set work that builds on what they already know and understand. However, in a few lessons this planning is less effective and so there is not enough challenge, particularly for more-able students.
- Most students arrive at school with good standards of literacy. Nonetheless, the school has decided on improving literacy to high standards in all subjects. This is shown in sustained and sophisticated written and oral work, including debate. Marking often focuses on spelling, punctuation and grammar and key words are used effectively to develop the students' understanding of a subject. Homework is set regularly and used well to develop students' understanding of a subject or to extend their thinking.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Class sizes are generally small and teachers are able to offer personal programmes and support, which enable students to make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents, carers and teachers agree that the behaviour of students, including when they attend alternative provision for diploma courses elsewhere, is a particularly strong feature of the school. At its best, their exemplary attitudes make an exceptionally positive contribution to the quality of learning. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, students worked in pairs solving problems and then moved enthusiastically around the class sharing their ideas. Encouraged in this way by the teacher, the students made outstanding progress.
- Students show their pride in the school through their smart appearance and the way they conduct themselves moving to and from lessons. They arrive punctually and ready to learn and on the few occasions when there is minor misbehaviour it is because of less effective teaching which fails to involve them in their learning or to excite and challenge.
- The students' excellent conduct and positive attitudes to their learning are reflected in the school's very low rates of exclusion and high attendance figures. Staff provide excellent examples of behaviour and this helps to ensure that the atmosphere in school is calm, friendly and purposeful.
- Almost all parents and carers agree that their child enjoys coming to school, feels safe and that the school deals effectively with any bullying that might occur.
- Through the school council, the outstanding learners' team and a variety of other roles and responsibilities, students rightly believe that they have a genuine say in the day-to-day running of the school.
- Students have an awareness of the different types of bullying and good understanding of potential dangers such as drugs and alcohol abuse, the risks of internet use and cyber-bullying.

The leadership and management are good

- At the heart of the school's success is the headteacher's focus on the achievement of every student within a caring and supportive school community. Teaching has been a priority for improvement and, as a result of well-thought-out systems for gauging its quality and providing training for staff, much is now good and some is outstanding. Subject leaders' involvement in this process has not always been consistent and their impact has therefore been more limited. Performance management is rigorous and pay rises are linked to the targets set for teachers and the achievement of the students that they teach.
- Leaders know their school well and use this information to identify what needs to be done to improve still further. The school development plan accurately identifies the priorities and actions that need to be taken for the school to progress. For example, the quality of learning in the sixth form will be enhanced by the forming of a collaborative partnership with a neighbouring school at the start of the next academic year.
- The school's curriculum provides an excellent match to students' interests and abilities. Links with a local school and other providers ensure that students can access a wider range of courses including diplomas in business and finance, information and communication technology (ICT) and social health. The school's specialism in engineering has helped to ensure a high uptake of mathematics and physics at advanced level. In the lower school, good use is made of time so that students can also develop their leadership and independent learning skills through vocational qualifications in sport and ICT. Entrepreneurial skills are developed through house charity work and competitions.
- The school is very effective in promoting students' spiritual and cultural development. A wide range of trips, visits, including to other countries, and special events such as plays and concerts makes a rich contribution to the life of the school.
- An educational adviser has worked usefully with the school in reviewing the quality of teaching and helping with self-assessment.
- Leaders at all levels are committed to promoting equal opportunities and ensuring that discrimination is not tolerated.
- Safeguarding arrangements are very thorough and meet requirements. The school takes all reasonable steps to ensure behaviour and safety when students are attending off-site provision.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors bring a wide range of expertise to the school. They know their school well and are ambitious for it to succeed. Through their committees and regular visits to the school, they have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and what needs to be done to improve. They oversee performance management processes closely and make sure that pay progression is linked to good teaching. Their participation in relevant training has meant that governors are able to support and ask challenging questions of the leadership team. For example, they have looked closely at the performance of students who receive pupil premium funding and compared this with the performance of other pupils. They have also been able to assess how well the school is doing compared with other similar schools, for example by using the recently published 'data dashboard'. Governors have a rigorous and expert oversight of school finances. They are diligent in ensuring that safeguarding and child-protection policies meet statutory requirements.

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	137227
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	406663

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	889
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roy Carlo
Headteacher	Andy Williamson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01322 223090
Fax number	01322 289920
Email address	headteacher@wgsb.org.uk

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