

# Devonport High School for Girls

Lyndhurst Road, Peverell, Plymouth, PL2 3DL

**Inspection dates** 22–23 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher, other senior leaders and members of the governing body are strongly committed to raising achievement. As a result, standards of attainment are high and rising.
- The quality of teaching is good and improving. Recent initiatives have contributed to a rise in standards.
- Relationships between staff and students are strong.
- Students behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school, and feel very safe.
- The sixth form is good. Students do well in their examinations and make good progress. Most go on to university.
- Social, moral, spiritual and cultural provision is very strong.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are inconsistencies across departments in the progress made by the most able in the sixth form.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding.
- There is inconsistency in the performance of some middle leaders.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons, of which seven were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team observed areas around the school at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors also looked at examples of students' work and case studies. The quality of marking and written feedback was noted.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils, the Chair and four members of the governing body, and senior and middle managers.
- Inspectors took account of 98 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire, a letter and a telephone call from parents, and 35 staff questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, the school's own data on students' current progress, monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents regarding safeguarding.

## Inspection team

John Mallone, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Cavill	Additional Inspector
Teresa Gilpin	Additional Inspector
Terry Payne	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Devonport High School for Girls is a smaller than average-sized grammar school which converted to become an academy on 1 April 2011. When its predecessor school, also called Devonport High School for Girls, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The school is part of a local consortium, The Link Partnership, which allows sixth formers to access a wider range of A-level subjects.
- Most students are White British. The number of students from a minority ethnic background is small and few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and are supported through school action, is low. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is very low.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, children from service families and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is low.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4.
- The school is a specialist language college and a Leading Edge school.

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and further accelerate students' progress in all classes by:
  - giving students more opportunities to work independently in lessons so that they are better able to shape their own learning
  - extending the use of effective questioning in lessons.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
  - extending the use of effective middle leaders to support and develop other middle leaders, particularly in the monitoring of marking.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the school in Year 7 with high prior attainment and achieve high grades at GCSE. In 2013, 100% of students gained five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics and 69% of all GCSE entries were graded A\* or A. There are no discernible differences in the achievement of different minority ethnic groups.
- Rates of progress in English and mathematics, and almost all other GCSE subjects, have improved from 2012 to 2013. The school's data for current students show that rates of progress are being sustained and that attainment is expected to continue to improve.
- There is some variation in performance in different subjects. The school has accurately identified subjects where performance is less strong and has taken steps to improve students' progress and the standards that they reach. As a result, attainment has risen in almost all subjects.
- A small number of students are entered early for GCSE mathematics in January of Year 11 for the Lower Tier paper in order to boost their confidence and again in June for the Higher Tier paper. The school has reviewed this policy and now enters this group in November of Year 11. As a result, this group of students is now reaching a higher standard when they sit the examination at the end of Year 11.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Starting from high prior attainment, students achieve higher than average grades at AS and A level. The proportion achieving the highest grades has not been as high as is expected. As a result of a more focused attention to the progress of individuals, there is evidence that the most able are beginning to achieve in line with the school's high expectations. The attainment of students who take subjects at other schools in the consortium is in line with those who study only in the school's sixth form.
- The gap in attainment between students receiving the pupil premium and others has steadily narrowed both in English and mathematics. In 2013, these students were on average a quarter of a grade behind their classmates in English. In mathematics, this gap was a third of a grade in 2013. In 2013, all students in this group achieved five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics.
- The very small numbers of disabled students and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with their classmates. In 2013, all students in this group achieved five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics.
- The quality of art work on display around the school is very high and enhances the learning environment. Students achieve well in a wide range of sporting and cultural activities. There are regular dance, musical and theatrical performances, involving large numbers of students, including productions such as *Guys and Dolls*, *Canterbury Tales* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers have strong relationships with students and their subject knowledge is good. They have high expectations and challenge students to achieve their best. Lessons are clearly planned and structured to support the development of understanding.
- Most lessons are good or outstanding. The school's own evaluations of teaching over time concur with this finding.
- In outstanding lessons, teachers regularly question students to check and extend their understanding. Students are encouraged to develop a high level of independence, using their classmates to test ideas and explore concepts. Students apply their knowledge in practical or simulated contexts. The pace in these lessons is brisk, but always responsive to the needs of students so that they remain strongly engaged.
- In the few lessons where teaching requires improvement, teachers talk too long and stifle students' independent learning skills. They use too many closed questions and expect all

students to do the same activity at the same speed.

- The use of assessment to support students' learning is good. In the best lessons, teachers continually adjust their plans to match the progress of groups and individuals.
- Purposeful and challenging homework is set regularly. Written feedback is generally helpful in pointing out how students can improve their work, although there is variation between subjects.

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

- Students have very positive attitudes towards their learning. They are eager and enthusiastic in lessons and work well independently and in groups. This contributes to the rapid progress that they make.
- Students are courteous and respectful towards one another and to teachers and other adults, both in lessons and as they move around the school. They are punctual in arriving at lessons. Students are fully aware of the different types of bullying, including e-bullying. The school actively promotes equality of opportunity and firmly tackles discrimination of any kind. There have been no incidents of bullying on the grounds of race, disability or sexual orientation. A group of students recently gave a presentation to parents and carers about how to stay safe on the internet.
- There is a clear system of behaviour management which rarely needs to be used.
- All groups of students feel safe including when they use off-site provision, such as that provided by the sixth form consortium arrangements. They understand clearly what constitute unsafe situations and how to keep themselves safe.
- Attendance among vulnerable groups has improved and overall attendance is in line with that for schools with similar proportions of students eligible for free school meals.
- No students have been excluded from the school.

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

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and has built a strong senior leadership team with consistently high expectations of staff and students.
- Senior leaders have a clear vision for the school, and a strong understanding of the school's strengths and the areas which still need development. This is the result of a rigorous system for reviewing performance at all levels.
- The systems for tracking and monitoring are a strength of the school. Senior and middle leaders review students' progress regularly and put in place plans to address the needs of individuals.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good. The new head of sixth form has put in place measures to monitor the progress of students more closely. This is already leading to improvements in their rates of progress.
- The school's use of performance management has made effective use of the link between performance and pay.
- Teachers' training has been well linked to issues identified by the school, for example the need to extend the use of open questioning and encourage the development of more independent learning. This training has begun to have an impact across the school.
- Although there are effective middle leaders in the school, senior leaders have not made enough use of their expertise to help raise the effectiveness of others who are less successful. Some middle leaders have not checked the quality of marking well enough to ensure that it meets the highest standards.
- Progress in literacy is strong. Students are articulate both in speech and writing and tackle complex written texts well.
- The school encourages students to take on responsibility, for example through the mentoring

scheme where sixth formers support younger students who are experiencing difficulties in their learning.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced, and supports students' progress well. It is strengthened by the wide range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities for enrichment. The school uses its specialist language college status well to broaden students' horizons through its strong international links with countries on several continents: there are many foreign trips, including student exchanges; links are also maintained through the use of video conferencing. Opportunities in the sixth form are widened by the school's participation in The Link Partnership consortium.
  - Students receive appropriate guidance to help them make choices about courses, including those linked to apprenticeships, both in-school and beyond.
  - The school has used the pupil premium well to support students in English and mathematics by providing one-to-one sessions with specialist teachers and extra revision. This has contributed to the steady narrowing of the gap between these students and their classmates.
  - The School Improvement Partner has worked closely with senior and middle leaders to support the review process. This has contributed strongly to the improved performance in some subject areas.
  - The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet all current regulatory requirements.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Governors are deeply committed to the school, and have a good understanding of the way it works. They work closely with the senior leadership team and meet departmental leaders regularly so that they know about the quality of teaching. Governors understand how well students are achieving, including those in receipt of the pupil premium, and systematically challenge senior leaders to improve the rate of progress. Governors understand the system for managing teachers' performance and pay. They closely monitor the school's budget, including the spending of money from the pupil premium, and are fully involved in finding solutions to problems. All governors receive regular 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>	136588
<b>Local authority</b>	Plymouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	426831

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<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>	830
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	230
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dr A Lam
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs A Hems
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01752 705024
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