

Hillview School for Girls

Brionne Gardens, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 2HE

Inspection dates

11–12 December 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.

- Students achieve well in the range of different subjects they study, especially in English and the performing arts. They are now making better progress in mathematics and the dip in 2012 has been reversed. Achievement in the sixth form is improving.
- Disabled students, those who have special educational needs, students who have English as an additional language and those in receipt of pupil premium funding achieve as well as their peers.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and students are very well supported. Data are effectively used to target underperformance so that intervention is personalised and effective.
- This is a caring, supportive school. It makes a good contribution to the welfare and well-being of its students. As a result, students enjoy coming to school and say that the school helps them to keep safe.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the school. Students are punctual, attendance is improving and fixed-term exclusions have reduced. The respectful and harmonious ethos permeates the school community.
- The acting headteacher and other leaders, including members of the governing body, have taken decisive action to improve teaching and this is having a positive impact. Leadership in the sixth form is better focused on improving teaching and raising achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Progress for all students and groups of students is good, but not yet excellent. Over time, there has been some variation in how quickly students make progress in some subjects, including science and history.
- Achievement in the sixth form is broadly in line with national averages, although examination results are rising and retention rates improving.
- The development of students' research skills is very evident in performing arts, but not yet consistent across the school, and this sometimes restricts progress.
- The quality of teachers' feedback does not always provide students with clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work.
- Students' literacy and numeracy skills are not sufficiently and consistently promoted across all subjects in the curriculum.

Information about this inspection

- During the two days, inspectors observed 48 lessons and part lessons, including 20 joint lesson observations with senior and middle managers. They also conducted a number of short visits to classrooms, focusing on teaching and behaviour.
- Inspectors looked at students' work and discussed the students' learning and progress with them. They looked at samples of work, especially in English, mathematics and science, focusing on attainment, progress and assessment.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of students in all key stages including sixth form students. They also held informal discussions with a range of students before school and during break times to gather their views.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle managers and other staff. The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including lesson observation records, governors' minutes, development plans, safeguarding documentation, performance management records, and attainment and progress data.
- Inspectors took account of 111 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as 58 responses received from the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jackie Jones	Additional Inspector
David Smith	Additional Inspector
David Webster	Additional Inspector
Jason Hughes	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hillview School for Girls is a very large 11 to 18 girls' secondary modern with a mixed sixth form. Approximately half of the students in the sixth form are from other schools. The school converted to an academy in August 2011.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was being led by the acting headteacher who has taken responsibility for the running of the school in the absence of the substantive headteacher who is currently recovering from major surgery.
- The school has a specialism in performing arts, selecting 10% of students based on their aptitude in dance, drama or music.
- The majority of students are White British with small numbers of other White, Asian, Caribbean and African students. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of students supported by school action is in line with the national average. The proportion of students supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and children from service families, is below the national average. The number of students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium is small.
- A very small number of students are educated off site at Grow2Grow, Hadlow College, West Kent Health Needs, West Kent Student Support Centre and the Tonbridge Lighthouse Project for students who are at risk of permanent exclusion or non attendance.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress at the end of Key Stage 4.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and raise achievement by:
 - promoting students' literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects in the curriculum
 - increasing the opportunities for students to develop their research and critical thinking skills
 - identifying and sharing the very best practice from across the school, especially that found in the performing arts subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with overall attainment which is well below national averages. Students' attainment is improving and is now in line with national averages. In 2013, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, was significantly above the national average. This reflects good progress from students' starting points.
- Previous underperformance in mathematics has been rigorously addressed, so that attainment in mathematics in 2013 was in line with national averages and progress was good on the basis of students' low starting points. Relative underperformance in science and history has also been tackled with determination. Lesson observations and scrutiny of work confirm that these improvements are being sustained for current students.
- Students enter the school with low literacy skills which are addressed through additional support in English lessons, although less consistently across the curriculum. Students' numeracy skills are developed in mathematics lessons, but not yet sufficiently promoted across other subjects. Students' information and communication technology skills are developed well.
- Students make good progress in Key Stage 3 as a result of the school's careful tracking and additional support. Progress in Key Stage 4 is at least good, and in English and the specialist subject areas it is particularly strong. Progress seen in lessons was good. The large majority of parents and carers agree.
- Students in receipt of Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding make similar progress to their peers as a result of the school's support for their well-being and the development of basic skills, especially literacy, in Year 7. The attainment of pupil premium funded students was one grade lower in English and mathematics than that of their peers. The gap is reducing and the school's data show current students to be on track for the gap to reduce further in 2014.
- All groups of students, including those who are disabled, those who have special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language make similar, and occasionally better, progress than their peers as a result of the focus on teaching and learning and the better use of available data. Students attending off-site provision make good progress on courses that are personalised for their specific needs.
- The school enters small numbers of students early for GCSE English and mathematics examinations. Teachers have given careful consideration to this decision and believe it increases the confidence and examination skills of the target group of students. Early entry students achieve well and care is taken to ensure that students do not drop subjects until they achieve the grades expected of them.
- Achievement in the sixth form is broadly average for the AS and A2 courses, but better for the vocational courses. Examination results are improving and the gap between girls and boys is narrowing as a result of better target setting and improved teaching. Staying on and retention rates have improved significantly.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good. There is an increasing proportion that is outstanding. The quality of teaching is characterised by strong subject knowledge which is used well to plan carefully resourced, fast-paced and mostly challenging lessons that enable students to make good or better progress.
- Questioning is used well to probe students' understanding and decide when to move the lesson on, as well as leading to high-quality discussions where views are challenged. Relationships are strong and expectations are high.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, as well those who speak English as an additional language, benefit from careful planning and the additional help provided by support staff. Students eligible for the pupil premium and those who are supported by the

Year 7 catch-up programme receive one-to-one support which focuses on literacy and ensures that they make good progress.

- Where teaching is not so good, questioning is often closed so that progress and the embedding of learning are difficult for the teacher to assess. In such lessons observed, teachers did not take account of the spread of students' ability in their planning and students often just waited for the teacher to give the answer. There were not enough opportunities for them to use what they had learned to think things out for themselves.
- The quality of teachers' feedback on students' work is inconsistent across the school. Students understand how well they are doing, but feedback focuses on what they can do rather than providing students with clear guidance on what they need to do next to improve their work. Critical and supportive peer-assessment was evident across the performing arts subjects, but assessment in mathematics and science was limited to brief comments.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students treat each other with respect and courtesy. Relationships are harmonious and differences of ethnic background and culture are celebrated. Students are keen to succeed and take pride in the academy's rising reputation.
- Students are punctual and behave well to create a safe, orderly and calm school environment. Attendance has improved and fixed-term exclusions have reduced as a consequence of higher expectations and tailored strategies to support individuals and their families.
- Instances of bullying and racist incidents are infrequent. Students have a good awareness of different forms of bullying such as cyber bullying, homophobic behaviour, and religious and ethnic intolerance. Students are very confident that any instances of bullying or harassment will be dealt with quickly and effectively by staff.
- School records show that incidents of poor behaviour have declined significantly this year. Management of behaviour by staff is consistent and clear. High expectations and the careful application of a rewards and consequences system have resulted in improved standards of behaviour across the academy.
- Staff are aware of the needs of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable and put effective strategies in place for them. As a result, there have been marked improvements over time for students with such needs.
- Behaviour and safety are not outstanding as students do not yet consistently display a thirst for, and a love of, learning. The development of students' independent learning and their critical thinking and research skills is not yet consistent across the school.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is very capably led and managed by the acting headteacher, with the backing of the governors and the support of the senior leadership team. She has ensured that the school has continued to develop and move forward as a result of her tireless dedication.
- Commitment, determination and high expectations are fully embedded in the ethos of the school and act as a focus for school development. The school's judgements on the quality of its work are robust and accurate. Senior staff and the governing body have a clear view of the school's performance against national benchmarks.
- Development planning identifies the key areas for improvement, but documentation is rather too long so that it is not always clear what is the focus for improvement. Academy leaders are honest about the further work that needs to be done to improve teaching in some subjects and ensure consistency in marking.
- The quality of teaching has improved recently and the sharing of best practice is a regular feature of the school. During the joint lesson observations carried out with the inspection team,

senior leaders were accurate in their judgements on the quality of teaching and astute in identifying exactly what needed to be done to improve.

- The curriculum is broad, balanced and entirely suited to the abilities and aspirations of the students in the school. There is adequate provision for vulnerable students who are very well supported in the 'Sapphire Group'. The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides opportunities for higher-attaining students to follow additional science and further mathematics, while the sixth form curriculum provides a good balance of academic and vocational courses with an appropriate match of students to courses.
- The development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is a real strength as a result of regular 'Personal Development Learning' lessons and support from a range of enrichment activities. Students have access to a range of high-quality extra-curricular opportunities, many of which are specialism related.
- Parents and carers who responded to the online survey recommended the academy. It is clear from the number of positive comments received during the inspection from parents, carers and other members of the community that the reputation of the academy is growing.
- Safeguarding requirements meet statutory requirements. All academy staff are completely committed to students' safety and well-being, whether on site or attending off-site provision.
- The academy benefits from additional support provided by the local authority, including ongoing support for leadership and the development of teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is strong and well informed. Governors have a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses supported through regular updates, on-site visits and regular feedback.
 - Local authority and external training have ensured that governors have a good understanding of what constitutes good teaching and how well students are achieving against national benchmarks. They ask demanding questions of the acting headteacher.
 - Governors are suitably involved in decisions about teachers' pay progression and how this relates to the quality of teaching. They understand performance management and how the school rewards good teaching.
 - Governors keep a watchful eye on how the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up money is spent. They require the acting headteacher to demonstrate that the money is having a positive impact on the progress of eligible students.
 - Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding and child protection.

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	137104
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426694

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,347
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	313
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Newlands
Headteacher	Elaine Buchanan (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 November 2010
Telephone number	01732 352793
Fax number	01732 368718
Email address	admin@hillview.kent.sch.uk

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