

# Chatham Grammar School for Girls

Rainham Road, Chatham, Kent ME5 7EH

## Inspection dates

22–23 May 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	<b>Good</b>

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- This is an improving school, due to strong leadership and effective support from the University of Kent Academies Trust (UKAT).
- Since the school joined UKAT in September 2017, governors and leaders have taken decisive action to tackle previously declining standards.
- The executive principal has clear vision, determination and a sense of direction.
- During the last academic year, the trust has reorganised and strengthened leadership throughout the school. Senior leadership is strong and subject leadership is improving.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching, which is now good overall. However, there are some inconsistencies in teaching, and not all pupils are supported or challenged enough to do their best, particularly the most able pupils.
- The standard of pupils' work is improving in most subjects. Disadvantaged pupils, and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, make good progress. The most able pupils have not achieved as well as they should.
- Safeguarding is a real strength of the school. Vulnerable pupils benefit from timely and effective support when required.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are keen to learn. Strong relationships between staff and pupils help pupils feel secure and promote their learning and personal development well.
- The experienced and astute governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and those aspects which could be even better. Governors are ambitious for high academic excellence as well as the need to carefully prepare pupils and students for their next steps.
- Activities sponsored by The University of Kent are enriching the curriculum and providing high-quality opportunities for pupils.
- The sixth form requires improvement because the curriculum offer is currently too narrow, standards are not high enough and enrichment and work-related opportunities are not individualised. UKAT leaders are aware of these shortcomings and a new University of Kent post-16 provision will open in September 2018.
- The necessary changes to policies and practice, and the high turnover of staff, have been unsettling for some staff, pupils, parents and carers.

## Full report

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

- Eliminate the remaining inconsistency in the quality of teaching.
- Further raise achievement across the school, particularly that of the most able pupils.
- Improve provision for students in the sixth form by:
  - increasing teachers' expectations of students and improving the consistency of teaching in order to raise standards of achievement, especially for the most able
  - implementing plans to broaden the courses offered
  - developing students' individual 16 to 19 study programmes so that they derive greater benefit from work experience and other non-qualification activity.
- Ensure that changes to the school's approach to school improvement are fully understood by staff, pupils and parents.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since September 2017, leaders and governors from the University of Kent Academies Trust (UKAT) have set out to reverse the decline in standards at the school. Previously, GCSE and A-level outcomes were too low, leadership was weak, and the quality of teaching varied considerably across the school.
- The executive principal, school principal and the UKAT leadership team are determined to improve the quality of education at the school. UKAT leaders bring experience and expertise in driving school improvement. Leaders quickly introduced rigorous accountability systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and assess pupils' progress accurately. The demands of these tasks, coupled with some resistance from some staff, limited the rate of improvement during the autumn term.
- The executive principal has been tenacious in holding staff to account for the progress pupils are making. As a result, there has been a high turnover of staff. Sometimes, supply staff were in place before suitable replacements were appointed. A number of parents are unhappy about the turbulence their children have experienced this year, although others appreciate that the changes are raising expectations and having a positive impact.
- The majority of senior and middle leaders have seized the opportunities to revitalise the school. As new systems became established and the school stabilised, leaders helped teachers to strengthen their practice, and standards at the school are now improving rapidly. The rate of pupils' progress has increased markedly across the curriculum.
- Some subject leaders show strong expertise and a determination to improve the quality of teaching and learning further. As a result of leaders' higher expectations, teaching overall is good, although some variation in the quality of teaching persists across and within subjects. Some pupils still carry a legacy of previously poor teaching and require help to address misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge. In addition, some subject leadership is still in transition.
- Leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and work in pupils' books and moderate pupils' assessment information. This enables leaders to identify precisely the aspects teachers need to improve. A bespoke programme of coaching, alongside whole-staff training, is helping teachers to hone their skills, and is leading to higher achievement by pupils.
- Additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is spent effectively to improve the progress of pupils. Leaders make sure that these pupils are given appropriate support to address their learning needs.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding well to improve the progress, overall, of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school.
- The key stage 3 and 4 curriculum provides pupils with an appropriate range of subjects. The sixth-form curriculum is currently too narrow and a much broader post-16 offer will be available from September 2018. Work is under way to ensure that an engaging curriculum will promote higher aspirations through a leadership programme

from Year 7 upwards. Greater emphasis is being placed on STEM subjects: science, technology, engineering and mathematics. However, it is too soon to see the impact of these developments.

- There is a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, many organised by The University of Kent Partnership Office. Undergraduate and postgraduate students are increasingly mentoring and coaching pupils, particularly in the higher year groups. All Year 7 pupils recently visited the university's campuses to promote their interest in higher education. Pupils in Year 10 and students in Year 12 have been inspired by a purposeful trip to Paris, organised by personnel from the university. The UKAT leader for physical education has invigorated sporting activities and there is increasing participation in clubs and teams.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and is embedded throughout the curriculum, particularly through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain through the successful promotion of British values throughout the curriculum and a strong sense of equality.

### **Governance of the school**

- The UKAT governing body is a strength of the school. Experienced, determined and insightful governors have high aspirations for the school. They bring a wide range of experience and expertise both to support and challenge leaders effectively.
- Governors are well aware of the school's strengths and also areas which could be improved. They are uncompromising in the need for urgent action to address the financial and educational weaknesses they inherited.
- Governors have a clear vision to use resources from the University of Kent to develop academic excellence, and also to prepare pupils and students well for higher education, training or employment. Suitable actions are under way and there are positive signs of early impact.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders' commitment to pupils' well-being and the overhaul of safeguarding practice have ensured a culture of safeguarding. Safeguarding systems and practices are now very well organised. The highly effective leader responsible for safeguarding has introduced easier ways for staff, pupils and parents to report concerns. Leaders' efficient monitoring of the information provided results in rapid and proportionate responses to concerns about pupils, including informing other agencies where appropriate.
- The safeguarding leader works well with other agencies to help families receive the necessary support.
- Statutory procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work with children are efficiently managed. Leaders ensure that regular training and updates about safeguarding are effective.

- Pupils state that they feel safe and well cared for at school and there are adults they would talk to if they have any problems.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching and learning is improving rapidly and this has helped to drive up the achievement of current pupils. Pupils are interested and keen to learn.
- Pupils benefit from teachers' secure subject knowledge across a wide range of subjects. Teachers generally have high expectations and expect pupils to do their best. Teachers set tasks which are designed to engage and motivate pupils. Where teaching leads to good or better achievement, skilful questioning probes pupils' thinking, to develop deep understanding.
- The most successful teaching takes close account of pupils' individual starting points and uses a range of strategies to meet their needs. However, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not consistently use assessment of pupils' progress to set work at an appropriate level. Sometimes, the most able pupils are not given challenging tasks and do not make as much progress as they are capable of. At other times, pupils are presented with tasks which they are not equipped to tackle because teachers have not checked their level of understanding carefully.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They regularly check their pupils' progress through assessments, which are moderated. There are examples of effective feedback from teachers, in line with the school's expectations. In these instances, pupils clearly understand what they have to do to improve, and they act on this feedback. However, there are some instances when the assessment policy is not being used effectively to help teachers plan the next steps in pupils' learning.
- Pupils relish opportunities to discuss topics and respond positively to increased expectations. Overall, they are enjoying their learning more. However, a number of pupils express concern about the frequent changes that have taken place, which have been unsettling. A few pupils are also unhappy about the high number of teachers they have had this year, particularly in English.

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

#### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' welfare has a high priority in the school. Diversity and difference are celebrated.
- The school provides effective support to vulnerable pupils. There is a graded response to helping pupils overcome difficulties they are facing, including mentoring by older pupils and counselling by professionals.
- The 'mindfulness' programme is helping to improve pupils' self-confidence and resilience. Support for pupils' well-being is being further strengthened through the deployment of trained students from the University of Kent to offer emotional support.

- Pupils feel safe, and are increasingly confident to say what they think in a trusting atmosphere. Pupils know whom to turn to if they have any worries. They report that on the few occasions bullying takes place, they are confident that it will be dealt with appropriately.
- Pupils' responses to the careers advice, information and guidance provided to support their next stages of development are mixed. Some pupils report that the advice has been impartial and very helpful. Other pupils felt that they needed more information regarding their subject choices for GCSE and A level, and the implications for future career choices.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They wear their uniform with pride. Pupils are polite and welcoming. Conduct around the school is orderly. Pupils are punctual to lessons, and are ready to learn.
- Pupils are keen and attentive in class. They respectfully listen to each other's views and opinions. Pupils work well together and relationships are strong.
- Attendance is above national levels and improving.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Standards are rising across the school in many subjects as a result of sharper leadership and better teaching. The school's performance information, along with work seen during the inspection, shows that outcomes are rising and, overall, progress is good. Progress made by disadvantaged pupils is similar to that made by other pupils with similar starting points.
- The most able pupils make slower progress than other groups in the school. Work seen in lessons and in books shows that some of the most able pupils could be further stretched and challenged. During work scrutiny, inspectors found that many pupils wrote convincing accounts to explain their thinking, when they were required to do so. However, these high expectations were applied inconsistently, and too often pupils' work did not reach the highest standards.
- The progress and attainment of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are improving but remain uneven. Improved leadership is starting to have a positive impact on the provision for these pupils.
- Pupils' learning in mathematics is a strength of the school. Careful planning and challenging work are helping pupils, including the most able pupils, to progress well from their starting points. Work in pupils' mathematics books shows high standards in all year groups. Pupils' outcomes in history remain consistently strong, and written work shows pupils responding positively to their teachers' high expectations.
- Standards in English have been too low, but are now rapidly improving. Pupils show strong literacy skills and the library is used well to promote reading.
- Pupils' rates of progress are increasing in a range of subjects where, previously, achievement was variable. These include: languages, science, art and physical education.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Requires improvement

- Outcomes for students in the sixth form are similar to those seen nationally. While overall outcomes are in line with national averages, the proportion of students who achieve higher A-level grades is below average.
- The school's performance information shows that current students in Year 13 made slow progress during Year 12, but have made better progress this year, and are on track to achieve outcomes similar to last year. Leaders acknowledge that, for a grammar school, achievement is too low. The rate of progress made by current students in Year 12 is faster, overall, but varies between subjects.
- Retention of students from Year 12 into Year 13 is lower than national levels. Recruitment from the school's Year 11 into the sixth form has previously been low, with only 37% choosing to join Year 12 in September 2017. Leaders attribute this to the narrow range of courses currently offered.
- Leaders have sensibly redesigned the post-16 curriculum to more appropriately build on students' starting points, interests and aspirations. From September 2018, a trust-wide, University of Kent post-16 provision will offer a range of level 3 qualifications, including a greater choice of A levels and vocational qualifications. As a result, almost all pupils in the current Year 11 have applied to join the trust's sixth form.
- Teaching in the sixth form is improving. During the inspection, teachers' secure subject knowledge and skilful questioning were seen effectively extending students' learning. However, there is variation between subjects and within subjects. Where learning is less effective, students are not routinely expected to explain their thinking accurately and succinctly. Expectations are not consistently high enough to enable students to achieve the highest A-level grades.
- Students behave well and their attendance is good. Some students act as mentors to younger pupils, supporting them with their well-being.
- Leaders do not ensure that each student's individual 16 to 19 study programme combines qualifications and other activities tailored to their prior attainment and career goals. Many students are not satisfied with the quality and extent of careers guidance they receive. Suitable work experience for students is not well planned or systematically evaluated.
- Students benefit from an increasing range of enrichment activities, many provided by the University of Kent. These include training as mentors for younger pupils, and opportunities to work with undergraduates and other university staff both on campus and in the school.
- Almost all students who left the school in 2017 went on to further education, employment or training. The vast majority take up places at university. This year, students in Year 12 have participated in a programme run by the University of Kent to raise aspirations and help students prepare for their university applications.

## School details

Unique reference number	137389
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10048455

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	713
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Nightingale
Principal	Wendy Walters
Telephone number	01634 851262
Website	<a href="http://www.chathamgirlsgrammar.medway.sch.uk">www.chathamgirlsgrammar.medway.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:postbox@chathamgirlsgrammar.medway.sch.uk">postbox@chathamgirlsgrammar.medway.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	23 January 2018

## Information about this school

- Chatham Grammar School for Girls is a smaller than the average-sized, girls, selective grammar school.
- The school joined the University of Kent Academies Trust (UKAT) in September 2017. There is one other school in the trust, which is a local, mixed, secondary school.
- UKAT's board of trustees, mainly appointed by the University of Kent, is responsible for the strategic direction and governance of both schools in the trust.
- A UKAT leadership team, comprising an executive principal and two principals, is responsible for the overall improvement of the school, to work alongside the school's



own principal.

- The proportion of pupils from multi-ethnic groups and those who have English as an additional language are below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below the national average.
- There are much lower numbers of disadvantaged pupils compared to the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- No pupils currently attend alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 29 lessons across all year groups. There were seven joint observations with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work in lessons and a further selection of pupils' books was scrutinised. Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons, around the school and during breaktimes.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive principal, the principal, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, and the chair and a member of the governing body.
- Inspectors took into account 34 responses to the confidential questionnaires received from staff and also met with individuals and groups of staff.
- The views of pupils were taken into account through 114 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils from each year group.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account 135 responses to the online Ofsted parent questionnaire, Parent View, including 131 free-text responses.
- Inspectors evaluated a wide range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, attendance information, safeguarding records, information on pupils' progress, minutes of governors' meetings, and quality assurance reports.

## Inspection team

Theresa Phillips, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Adam Mirams	Ofsted Inspector
Harry Ingham	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jennifer Bray	Ofsted Inspector

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