

Inspection of an outstanding school: Dartford Grammar School for Girls

Shepherds Lane, Dartford, Kent DA1 2NT

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 October 2021

Outcome

Dartford Grammar School for Girls continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils develop high ambitions and a very strong work ethic. They enjoy the vibrant atmosphere. Pupils behave extremely well and feel safe in school. They take responsibility for their own actions and enjoy each other's company during social times. Pupils are confident that rare incidents of bullying are dealt with seriously by staff.

Teachers have extremely high expectations of pupils. Pupils are expected to try their best. They make the most of the varied and extensive opportunities to develop their talents and interests. Clubs are very popular. Pupils across all year groups take part in extra-curricular activities such as gospel choir, origami club, orchestra and trampolining club. Other pupils apply to become 'diversity representatives' so that they can contribute to and support the school's diversity, inclusion and equality programme.

Pupils run some school events independently. For example, sixth-form students produced a series of assemblies to celebrate Black History Month. Pupils gave presentations, read poems and sang songs. They were delighted to be involved.

Pupils, and particularly disadvantaged pupils, achieve exceptionally well by the time they reach the end of Year 11. Most go into the school's sixth form, where they continue to excel. High proportions of students leave the sixth form to study at a higher level.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The headteacher, trustees and governors have a strong moral purpose and an unwavering commitment to social mobility and equality. Leaders have put in place an incredibly ambitious curriculum that challenges pupils at all levels. Leaders' main aim is to make sure that pupils are taught about 'the best that has been thought and said' in each subject. Subject leaders are experts in their areas. They structure and organise learning highly effectively.

Pupils learn a wide range of subjects that bring substantial balance to their education. They begin studying GCSEs in Year 9 and almost all pupils choose to study the English Baccalaureate subjects. To complement their examination courses, pupils continue to learn subjects that they have not chosen to study at GCSE level. For example, pupils study history, art or music in subjects such as 'global society', in the popular school musical productions or in the annual 'arts week'. In key stage 4 and key stage 5, curriculum plans often go beyond the breadth of examination specifications. Subject leaders include topics based on what they think it is important for pupils to learn as well as what pupils will be tested on in GCSE and A-level examinations.

Teachers are extremely knowledgeable. They make difficult principles and concepts come to life so that pupils' interest is stimulated. For example, in religious education (RE), Year 10 pupils were challenged to discuss different places of pilgrimage. Pupils used their knowledge from previous lessons to connect religious principles to the significance of different places of pilgrimage.

Pupils read widely and often. They develop a keen interest in different types of literature and factual reading materials as they get older. The English Department's 'sixteen by 16' programme lists fiction books that pupils are asked to read by the time they finish Year 11. Many of these books help pupils to develop their understanding of issues around equality and diversity. Pupils relish these opportunities.

Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified quickly and are provided with carefully considered support. Teachers understand how to remove any barriers to education that pupils with SEND may face.

Pupils concentrate very well in lessons and are respectful towards teachers and each other. There are very few incidents of low-level disruption. If it does happen, it is dealt with immediately and effectively. Pupils' conduct at social times is excellent. They act maturely and get on well together.

The extensive personal development programme helps pupils to develop their interests and talents very effectively. In every year group, there is a wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. For example, in Year 9, pupils join dance clubs or complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. In Year 12, students take part in creative writing, cooking and nutrition, knitting or touch typing.

Pupils benefit from high-quality careers guidance. They are provided with impartial advice about their potential next steps after Year 11 and Year 13. Pupils have opportunities to hear from external speakers and ex-students of the school.

Staff told inspectors that they appreciate the leaders' 'open door policy'. Staff feel that leaders listen to them and are considerate of their workload and well-being. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders oversee a strong safeguarding culture. Staff feel confident in knowing how to report and spot signs that a child might be at risk of harm. Leaders have put in place well-established routines and high-quality training for staff on the most recent government guidance.

Leaders carry out appropriate checks on the suitability of staff. Staff work with external agencies well and make sure that pupils have access to specialist help when they need it.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Dartford Grammar School for Girls, to be outstanding in June 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	144100
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10201102
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1244
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	354
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Janice Brooke
Headteacher	Sharon Pritchard
Website	http://www.dartfordgrammargirls.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school became the sole member of The Areté Trust on 1 June 2017. The headteacher became the chief executive officer of the trust from the date the trust was created.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the chair of the board of trustees and two governors.

- On the first day of the inspection, inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, PE and RE. This meant that in each subject, inspectors met with subject leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans in other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff from meetings with groups of staff and from the 61 staff who responded to Ofsted's confidential questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff.
- Inspectors considered the views of 76 parents who responded to the confidential Ofsted parental questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered the views of 335 pupils who responded to the confidential Ofsted pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Harry Ingham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Murphy

Ofsted Inspector

Sue Bzikot

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021