

# Inspection of Dartford Grammar School

West Hill, Dartford, Kent DA1 2HW

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Inspection dates: 6 and 7 December 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
The quality of education	<b>Outstanding</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils say that it is a 'privilege' to attend this exceptional school. They are rightly proud to be a highly valued member of the school community. Pupils learn to be polite, motivated, and hard-working individuals, who look after and care for each other. Leaders have ensured that pupils leave the school as international citizens, who cherish each other's differences and viewpoints.

Many pupils report confidently that there is 'nothing' to improve at this school. Parents and carers are extremely positive about their children's experiences. They told inspectors that this is 'a wonderful school where pupils flourish beyond expectations'.

Pupils are safe and happy. Bullying is extremely rare and many pupils report that it 'never' happens. However, all pupils are adamant that if it did occur, staff would take action to make it stop quickly.

Staff and pupils have the highest expectations for behaviour across the school. Pupils demonstrate exemplary behaviour by self-regulating their own and each other's behaviour. They support each other in their learning and enjoy their peers' company during social times. They are eager to come to school because of the warm and respectful relationships that they share with staff.

Community service and action are at the heart of all that the school does. Leaders carefully plan many opportunities for pupils to demonstrate active citizenship as leaders of school clubs and events. For example, the eco-council, badminton club and cultural day. Pupils develop an excellent intercultural understanding and sharpen their language expertise through participation in an excellent range of trips to China, Japan and Germany, for example. Leaders monitor participation closely to ensure that those who would benefit the most take part.

Pupils, including those in the sixth form, benefit from expert and independent careers guidance, so that they can make well informed decisions about their next steps.

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

Leaders have developed a highly ambitious and inclusive curriculum, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), so that all pupils achieve exceptional outcomes. Pupils study a broad and exciting range of subjects that provide them with strong foundations for future learning. Pupils value and benefit from learning at least two languages in key stages 3 and 4. All students in the sixth form continue to study languages and mathematics as an essential part of their study programme.

Leaders have focused sharply on improving the sequencing of the curriculum, so that pupils build securely on their knowledge. As a result, pupils apply, with precision and accuracy, previous learning to new ideas and concepts. For example, in geography, Year 12 students show how knowledge of plant life adaptations in the rainforest helps them to understand extreme climates. Pupils in Year 7 use key vocabulary and terminology, with proficiency and fluency, when talking in Japanese about their family.

Teachers are experts in their subjects. They develop learning activities that challenge and develop pupils in their thinking. Teachers question pupils skilfully to check what they know and have remembered. They quickly change their plans to address any misconceptions and gaps in learning. Leaders have ensured that assessment is timely and meaningful, so that pupils know what they must do to improve. Pupils with SEND receive the timely support and adaptations that they need to achieve high levels of success along with their peers.

Pupils enjoy reading a wide range of challenging texts. The library is an inviting place, where pupils can read books which promote diversity and equality.

Pupils are dedicated to their learning and talk enthusiastically about their studies. They, and their teachers, share a strong determination for them to succeed. Pupils work hard and show a keen interest in their lessons, where positive relationships between staff and pupils shine through. There is a calm and inclusive culture in the sixth form, where students thrive in a well-resourced and cheerful environment. Pupils in all key stages are excited to come to school and attend often. There are clear systems in place to support the very small number of pupils who attend less well.

Leaders are committed to providing pupils with an extensive range of experiences beyond their academic learning. They have implemented a well-sequenced personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, so that pupils know how to manage healthy relationships in an age-appropriate way. Pupils learn about values such as democracy through the school council election process. They contribute to positive change in the school by providing their views on how to improve the PSHE programme, for example. Pupils value the thoughtfully considered assembly programme, where they learn about kindness, online safety and consent. A remarkable number of pupils demonstrate resilience and independence through successful completion of the Duke of Edinburgh's award.

Leaders and governors are devoted to ensuring that all pupils excel academically and personally at the school. Governors ask pertinent questions to challenge leaders and ensure that there is a continued focus on school improvement. The headteacher and senior leaders have worked hard to listen to staff views and make changes to reduce workload. Staff feel highly valued and are exceptionally supportive of the headteacher. As a result, they are keen to play a full and active part in wider school life.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are knowledgeable about their safeguarding responsibilities through regular training. All staff know how to identify and report safeguarding concerns. Leaders take appropriate actions, so that pupils who they are concerned about get the right support that they need quickly. The school takes the necessary steps to ensure that adults are safe to work in the school.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They have every confidence that any concerns they report will be dealt with effectively by adults that they trust.

## 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.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136359
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10229052
<b>Type of school</b>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1516
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	598
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Robert Tibbott
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julian Metcalf
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.dartfordgrammarschool.org.uk">www.dartfordgrammarschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	21 May 2008, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is a selective grammar school within a single academy trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 of the school.
- The inspection team completed deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, geography, science, physical education and languages. To do this, they met with subject leaders, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited a range of sixth-form lessons.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, a selection of subject leaders, teachers, and support staff.
- Inspectors met with trustees (referred to as governors at this school) including the chair and vice chair of the trust.
- The inspection team reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising records and through discussions with staff and pupils.
- The views of pupils, parents, and staff were considered through discussions and a review of Ofsted's surveys.

## Inspection team

Zoë Harris, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Antonia Spinks	Ofsted Inspector
Eliot Hodges	Ofsted Inspector
Owen McColgan	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Woodman	Ofsted Inspector

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