

Inspection of Duke of York's Royal Military School

Duke of York's Royal Military School, Dover, Kent CT15 5EQ

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 February 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' conduct is excellent at Duke of York's. They treat each other respectfully and work hard in lessons. Staff do not tolerate bullying, and any friendship issues or poor behaviour are quickly rectified. Sixth formers play a full part in the life of the school and are positive role models to younger pupils. All pupils live in the school's boarding provision and form close relationships with staff. This helps pupils to feel safe. They have adults to talk to if they encounter problems or are worried about something.

Pupils embrace the exceptional enrichment activities that the school provides. Every pupil is involved in the rich school offer that includes hockey, rugby, swimming, squash, netball and a social skills club. Older pupils enjoy going to the 'duke box' gymnasium. Many pupils complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and follow the military traditions of the school by becoming a member of the Combined Cadet Force.

Staff have high expectations of pupils and they live up to these. Pupils know that a lot is expected of them. Students achieve well by the time they leave the sixth form and pupils in key stages 3 and 4 achieve highly across the subjects that they study.

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

Leaders have worked hard to improve the curriculum over recent years. This has paid off. In key stage 3, the curriculum is well organised and broad, preparing pupils well to study subjects at GCSE. However, not all pupils are prepared as well as they could be for their next steps after key stage 4 because too few pupils study the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of subjects. Importantly, most pupils do not learn a language in key stage 4, meaning that they miss out on the cultural and international opportunities that learning a language brings.

Subject leaders think very carefully about what to teach and how to organise knowledge in their subjects so that pupils build their knowledge as they progress through the curriculum successfully. Staff identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. Teachers adapt the curriculum very well for these pupils and support them ably, ensuring that they get the right help at the right time. This means that pupils with SEND produce high-quality work that is in line with that of their peers.

From Year 7 to Year 13, pupils benefit from teachers' strong subject knowledge. They use this to explain increasingly complex concepts in a way that pupils understand. Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning enable them to concentrate very well and develop high levels of understanding. Across key stages, teachers carefully assess what pupils remember and know. Teachers address pupils' misconceptions well and answer difficult questions about their subjects readily. Teachers use

resources very effectively. For example, in science pupils benefit from well-constructed laboratory work that deepens their understanding.

Leaders value and encourage reading. The English department works closely with the librarian to encourage pupils to read regularly and to become lifelong readers. Weaker readers are encouraged to read appropriately challenging books. They receive effective support to catch up. Pupils routinely grab a book and sit in the library. They develop a keen understanding of different types of literature and non-fiction texts as they move through the school.

All pupils, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, benefit immensely from the rich personal development provision. Pupils' personal development is at the heart of leaders' ambitions and actions. Many pupils opt to become 'peer listeners' and others become prefects. The wealth of rich opportunities on offer to pupils helps them to develop their resilience and character securely.

Staff deliver a well-designed and age-appropriate personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. Pupils learn about areas such as making moral decisions, eating healthily and diversity. Important issues, such as tolerance, equality and respect, are taught through the assembly programme and through curriculum subjects. For example, in history Year 7 pupils learn about the experiences of disabled people and those from a range of ethnic groups in different historical periods. The carefully constructed careers programme begins in key stage 3, and by the time students are in the sixth form they are well informed about future careers.

Staff are very complimentary about leaders' consideration of their workload and well-being. Staff feel protected from bullying and harassment and describe the school as a warm and friendly community. Trustees are committed to supporting leaders in improving the school further. However, trustees are not always well-informed about how well leaders' actions work. Consequently, they have not held leaders to account as well as they could.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed a vigilant and robust safeguarding culture. They record safeguarding concerns rigorously and staff follow these up quickly. Appropriate checks are made on the suitability of staff to work at the school and staff are trained regularly in safeguarding. Consequently, staff have a strong understanding of the risks that children potentially face.

Leaders work well with external agencies to ensure that pupils who need extra support receive it swiftly. Leaders work hard to maintain the systems surrounding the safeguarding of pupils while at school. Pupils feel that the pastoral team looks after them well. Pupils told inspectors that there are plenty of staff to go to if they are worried about something. Pupils are also aware of the ways to report

safeguarding issues, such as their school laptops' 'safeguarding button', which allows them to anonymously report concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not enough pupils study the full range of EBacc subjects at GCSE. Consequently, they are not as well prepared for their next steps as they could be. Leaders need to ensure that higher proportions of pupils study all EBacc subjects by the end of Year 11 so that they have the best chance of success in the next stages of their education, employment or training.
- Trustees do not fully appreciate how well leaders' improvement strategies work. This means that trustees are not able to hold leaders to account as robustly as they could. Trustees need to strengthen their knowledge of the impact of leaders' actions so that they hold leaders to account more effectively.

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

Unique reference number	136177
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10269298
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	505
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	124
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Thorne
Principal	Alex Foreman
Website	www.doyrms.com
Date of previous inspection	26 April 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Duke of York's Royal Military School is a state boarding school. The trust manages the onsite boarding provision, where all pupils who attend the school board.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, the chair of the trust and trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, art and design, history and languages. 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 spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff from meetings with groups of staff and from the 92 staff who responded to Ofsted's confidential questionnaire.
- Inspectors evaluated the school's safeguarding culture by reviewing safeguarding records, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff, scrutinising the school's website and policies and talking to staff, trustees and pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils from meetings and informal conversations and from the 96 pupils who responded to Ofsted's confidential questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered the views of 138 parents who responded to Ofsted's confidential questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and 111 parents who provided free-text comments.

Inspection team

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