

Inspection of Poole Grammar School

Gravel Hill, Poole, Dorset BH17 9JU

Inspection dates:	13 and 14 May 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Katie Etheridge. This school is part of Poole Grammar School single academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ken Power.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is ambitious for the pupils who attend this school. They have high expectations of their behaviour and academic achievement. Pupils rise to these expectations. They achieve excellent academic outcomes at key stage 4 and 5. Pupils proudly demonstrate the school values, including integrity and respect. They are happy and enjoy coming to school, as shown by their regular and punctual attendance.

Pupils display consistently excellent attitudes to learning. They learn in a disruption free environment. Pupils are resilient when faced with challenges in and beyond the classroom. The school does not tolerate any discriminatory behaviour. Instead, difference is celebrated. For example, by the 'Free and Equal' ambassadors who promote high levels of respect towards everyone.

Pupils benefit from extensive opportunities to develop their leadership skills, influence the life of the school and develop their character. For example, some pupils work with peers from other schools to develop their sporting skills and their self-confidence. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, proudly take on roles such as being mentors, anti-bullying ambassadors, prefects and members of student voice groups. Sixth-form students compete for 'The Gilpin Cup' with events including tug of war and cookery competitions. This develops a strong community spirit.

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

Pupils experience a broad and ambitious curriculum. Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have identified areas within the quality of education that can be strengthened further. This work, with the support of trustees, is underway but is yet to be fully realised. Therefore, on occasion, the quality of teaching that pupils experience is variable. In these instances, teaching does not use the most appropriate activities to support pupils' learning or check pupils' understanding carefully enough.

The school is committed to removing barriers so that all pupils, including the most disadvantaged, have an equal opportunity to attend this school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are welcomed and supported effectively. The school has a clear process for identifying any additional needs that pupils may have. They work collaboratively with pupils, and their parents and carers, to put any required adaptations in place. Pupils with SEND appreciate the safe and nurturing environment of the 'Bryson Base'. Here, they can seek adult support or spend time with their peers at lunchtimes. Disadvantaged pupils participate fully in the wider life of the school.

Staff have strong subject knowledge. Pupils benefit from many opportunities to engage in discussion and debate to support their learning, such as in history lessons. They do so confidently and articulately. Pupils' work in books and other outcomes, such as sketch books in art and design, are of a high quality.

The school encourages a culture of reading for pleasure. Many pupils are avid readers. Sixth-form students read widely and beyond the expectations of their courses. Although pupils who would benefit from some support with their literacy are identified, the impact of additional help that they receive is variable.

In classrooms and around the school, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They thrive with the range of opportunities available to them. At social times, many engage in physical activities such as athletics, football or tackling the climbing wall. Other pupils spend time working on their art, playing chess or attending the entrepreneurs scheme. Students in the sixth form enjoy photography, university challenge and stocks and shares competitions. More widely, pupils have a rich set of experiences through trips and visits. There is something for everyone and participation rates are high.

The school's 'Life Skills' programme is highly aspirational and gives pupils the skills to manage life in modern Britain. Topics are well judged and have been informed by contemporary issues. As part of their personal development, pupils learn about keeping healthy. Pupils are encouraged to speak openly about their mental health.

The school's careers programme ensures that pupils, and students in the sixth form, are well-informed of their future options. For example, by visiting universities, listening to guest speakers from industry, attending job seeking and application sessions and hosting previous pupils to talk about their experiences.

Parents are very supportive of the school. They appreciate the school's focus on developing well rounded, highly motivated and compassionate individuals. Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel valued as professionals. Most staff agree that reducing workload is a priority for leaders. Staff well-being is an important consideration when school leaders and trustees consider making any changes to policies and practice.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some areas of the curriculum, there is variability in how well teaching supports pupils to learn. On occasion, activity choice is not well considered and checking for understanding lacks precision. In these instances, pupils do not build their knowledge as successfully as they could. The school should ensure that pupils are provided with activities that deepens their knowledge and better prepares them for future learning.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136850
Local authority	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole
Inspection number	10378919
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	1199
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	301
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ken Power
Headteacher	Katie Etheridge
Website	www.poolegrammar.com
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 March 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Poole Grammar School single academy trust.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2024.
- The school uses three unregistered providers of alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements

(quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, other members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, and members of the trust board, including the chair of the trust board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also visited some lessons, and sampled pupils' work, in science.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Kelly Olive, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jonty Archibald	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Collins	Ofsted Inspector
Alun Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Malcolm Willis	Ofsted Inspector

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