



Poole Grammar School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113909
LEA Poole
Inspection number 279280
Inspection dates 15 March 2006 to 16 March 2006
Reporting inspector Gloria Dolan HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Gravel Hill
School category	Foundation		Poole
Age range of pupils	12 to 18		Dorset BH17 9JU
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	01202 692132
Number on roll	933	Fax number	01202 606500
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Jonathan Howe
Date of previous inspection	6 March 2003	Headteacher	Mr Ian Carter

Age group 12 to 18	Inspection dates 15 March 2006 - 16 March 2006	Inspection number 279280
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Poole Grammar School is a heavily oversubscribed, selective grammar school for boys. It is an average size school but has a large sixth form of around 300 pupils. It offers provision from year 8 to year 13. The school has specialist mathematics and computing status. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds at the school is higher than in the local population. Two pupils have statements of specific special educational needs and 86 other pupils have been identified as having additional learning needs.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors judge the school's overall effectiveness to be good: a view shared by the school. Pupils enjoy the intellectual challenge of their lessons. They participate enthusiastically in the rich variety of additional activities provided.

The standards reached by pupils are generally very high and their progress is good. Standards and progress at Key Stage 4 in science and mathematics and in some AS level subjects are not as good as in other subjects. The school provides good care, support and guidance for its pupils, whose attendance and punctuality are very good indeed. Teaching is good overall but of variable quality. Lesson observations have been extensive and further work is being done to ensure that all observers agree a common understanding of strengths and weaknesses when making judgements. Academic monitoring takes place regularly but the outcomes are not used well enough to ensure that all pupils reach their targets in all subjects. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The curriculum is good but relatively few pupils take qualifications earlier than usual. The curriculum structure is being reviewed and extended to provide greater choice and opportunities for pupils to advance more quickly. The impact of specialist school status has been significant in developing ICT across the whole school effectively but less successful in terms of boosting progress in mathematics.

Senior managers, governors and staff have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Its self-evaluation is detailed and self-critical and provides a good basis for action planning for improvements. Very good progress has been made in addressing weaknesses identified at the last inspection. The school has good capacity for improvement. Resources are well managed and the school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Inspectors and the school both judged the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form as good. Students work to a high standard and pass rates are high. Overall, students make good progress. Pass rates at A-level are very high but a small number of students fail to pass all of their AS level examinations. Pastoral support and careers guidance are exceptionally good. Students are articulate and confident and ask searching questions in lessons. Teachers help students to analyse lesson topics critically. Students participate enthusiastically in an extensive range of enrichment activities including many sporting, cultural and charitable events.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' success at AS level and also in science and mathematics at Key Stage 4.
- Make greater use of the information gathered from academic monitoring to improve pupils' performance.
- Ensure that high quality teaching is provided consistently throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' attainment is high at all key stages and their overall progress is good. The school sets challenging targets for pupils and builds effectively on their high level of prior attainment. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment scores are well above the national average and they make significantly better progress than expected. Pupils make particularly good progress in English and mathematics and average progress in science.

The standard reached at GCSE, in terms of the percentage of pupils gaining 5 A*-C grades in 2005, was very high at 99%. It has been around 100% in each of the last three years. Last year, pupils in year 11 made slightly better progress, overall, than expected during their time at school. They made very good progress in English, but, progress in mathematics between Key Stages 3 and 4 was much slower. The proportion of A*-A grades awarded at GCSE was significantly better than the national average in 11 out of 17 subjects but significantly lower in science subjects and drama.

In the sixth form, pass rates at GCE A-level and AS level are high. The proportion of A and B grades awarded over the last three years are much higher than the national average and rising. Pass rates in a small minority of AS level qualifications are not sufficiently high. Overall, students make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. They are courteous, well mannered and tolerant of differences such as disability and race. Pupils' spiritual and cultural education is much enhanced by the school's involvement in an international project.

Pupils really enjoy school, both their main lessons and the wide range of extra activities provided for them. Attendance and punctuality are very good indeed; there are very few exclusions. Pupils feel safe in school. Bullying is rare and is dealt with effectively. Pupils readily adopt safe practices in lessons such as science and PE, enhancing their enjoyment and achievement.

The school actively and successfully encourages healthy lifestyles through extensive provision for sport, fitness programmes and a good selection of healthy food at lunchtime.

Pupils value the outstanding careers guidance they receive, which, together with work experience and young enterprise activities, gives them excellent preparation for future employment. They are articulate and confidently express their views.

Pupils make very good contributions to the local and school communities through, for example, participation in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, charitable works and through holding positions of responsibility such as being prefects and games captains.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching in the main school and in the sixth form is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Good relationships between teachers and pupils contribute significantly to a purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Pupils' attitude to learning is outstanding and they are very keen to produce good work.

In the best lessons, teachers plan a range of interesting and challenging activities that motivate pupils and enable them all to progress well. Lesson objectives are clear. Pupils make productive use of their time and teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils respond to questions readily and participate in lesson activities with enthusiasm. Teachers check learning and progress frequently. Pupils show great determination to succeed. In a mathematics lesson on quadratic graphs, pupils worked diligently in pairs and individually to successfully solve complex problems using graphical calculators. They were highly motivated and made very good progress. In the sixth form, good teaching helps students develop research and independent learning skills in preparation for higher education.

Characteristics of the small number of less effective lessons include pupils not being actively involved and teachers relying on a narrow range of teaching methods. Opportunities to stretch and challenge all pupils, especially the most able, are missed. Teachers do not check that all pupils are learning effectively. Visual aids and handouts are of poor quality.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good in the main school and in the sixth form. The range of AS level and GCE A-level subjects available to pupils is successfully broadened through partnership arrangements with a girls' grammar school. A limited number of pupils take qualifications such as GCSE mathematics early but the range of subjects and numbers of pupils involved are low in most instances. The curriculum structure is being reviewed to provide greater choice and opportunities for pupils to advance more quickly throughout the school.

The range of additional activities is outstanding. They include artistic, cultural, academic and sporting activities. Many pupils' experiences of school are enhanced through their active participation in the programme of additional activities including many sports teams during weekdays and at weekends. Work experience is very well organised and valued by pupils. It plays a significant role in helping pupils to evaluate their options for their future careers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Overall and in the sixth form, care, guidance and support are good. Pupils receive outstanding pastoral care from the school's highly committed staff. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are excellent. Pupils consider the support and guidance they receive, and the good relationships between them and their teachers, as major strengths of the school.

High quality advice and guidance is provided at crucial stages of pupils' education about courses and careers.

The school's support for its vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, is highly effective and results in their inclusion in all areas of its provision. Strong links with other schools ensure that pupils are well supported as soon as they start.

Pupils' academic achievement is regularly monitored. However, the information gained from monitoring in both the main school and sixth form is not always used effectively in planning to ensure that all pupils achieve their targets and reach their potential.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school overall and in the sixth form are good. The excellent leadership by the headmaster is strongly focused on raising standards. His clear vision for the school is understood and supported by all staff, senior managers and governors. The school has sought the views of parents and pupils and has an accurate view of its strengths and most areas for improvement.

Rigorous systems for reviewing the performance of teachers and the school have successfully secured improvements in several areas. Lesson observation is extensive and generally effective. Systems for ensuring that all judgements are reliable are still developing. The school's judgements on the quality of teaching and learning agree closely with those made during inspection.

Very good progress has been made in addressing weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Governors are very well informed and bring an impressive range of expertise to the school. The school's capacity to improve is very good. There is good promotion of equal opportunities. Systems for ensuring that higher ability students fulfil their potential are developing. The school's reputation in the community is excellent. The overwhelming majority of parents are very happy with the school but a small minority would like better communication with parents.

Funds and resources are managed effectively and the school provides very good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, we recently inspected your school. You probably saw us around the school and we may have visited one of your lessons. Some of you came to meetings with us, where you were very good at telling us about your work and your progress. You also told us what you like about school and what you thought could be improved. You were very polite and helpful during the inspection and were particularly good at giving us directions when we got lost! We were very impressed with your behaviour in lessons and around the school. Some of your parents or carers filled in confidential questionnaires which we took into account when reaching our judgements. You all made an important contribution to the inspection and we would like to thank you very much for that.

The main strengths of the school are:

- the progress you make and the standards you achieve in most subjects
- your very good attitude to learning and your enthusiasm for school
- your very good behaviour in lessons and around the school
- the additional activities such as sports and clubs
- the way you support and care for each other

So as to improve further, the school needs to:

- make sure you do as well as you can in every subject, including science and mathematics in Years 10 and 11 and at AS level
- ensure that all lessons are as good as the best ones.
- give you challenging targets and monitor your progress towards them

Mr Carter has some really good plans to achieve these things. You can help a great deal by attending all of the time and continuing to behave well and work as hard as you can in all of your lessons.

Thank you again for all your help in the inspection and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gloria Dolan Her Majesty's Inspector