

# Dover Grammar School for Girls

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118806
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	291260
<b>Inspection date</b>	16 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Helen Hutchings

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	741
6th form	161
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Judith Carlisle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 September 2001
<b>School address</b>	Frith Road Dover CT16 2PZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01304 206625
<b>Fax number</b>	01304 242400

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Dover Grammar School for Girls is smaller than most secondary schools. Most students continue their education into the sixth form and the school works within a consortium of local secondary schools to provide a wide range of sixth form courses. Most students are from White British backgrounds but a number of other ethnic groups are represented in small numbers. A small proportion of students have learning difficulties or disabilities. The school has recently been designated as a specialist humanities school to strengthen community links, with effect from September 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. One parent summed up the views conveyed by many others when stating, 'I am very pleased that my daughter has the opportunity to attend such an excellent, high-achieving school.'

Standards are very high. Students join the school with standards already above national averages. In each year group, the gap between the school and national levels of performance increases significantly, indicating outstanding progress and achievement. The school has improved the already high levels of performance found in the last inspection and is rightly proud that performance at A level was the highest in the local authority for three of the last five years.

Another parent commented, 'DGGs is not only teaching my girls what they need to know academically but how to achieve their full potential and aim high with confidence and ability.' The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. This is the result of the outstanding care, support and guidance for their whole development. Students make a very strong contribution to the school and the wider community and develop excellent life skills for their own future economic well-being. Both students and staff comment on their appreciation of each other's contributions. Students enjoy their studies and value the help and support they are given, while staff speak warmly of their enjoyment in working with such motivated and hard-working students. Behaviour is exemplary so that lessons are focused and students also enjoy relaxing together socially. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong because of the exceptionally wide range of enriching activities. This, together with outstanding teaching, enables students to explore and reflect on a variety of ethical issues.

Undoubtedly the school's success is as a result of the excellence of teaching overall and a rich curriculum which provides students with an outstanding range and quality of learning activities within lessons and beyond. The school recognises that not all teaching has yet reached the level of the best but has an effective strategy to achieve this. An ongoing programme of professional development is further raising expectations of what students can achieve and spreading innovative practice even more widely across the school.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and senior managers provide excellent leadership and are dedicated to 'academic excellence and personal fulfilment'. One parent commented on the 'welcoming atmosphere which is down to the strong influence of a caring and dynamic headteacher'. The school has a calm and tolerant atmosphere. Staff are rigorous in their evaluation of school performance and embark on developments in a carefully thought out manner. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the recent success in achieving specialist humanities status. In spite of the ways in which the school surveys the opinions of parents, a few responded that they did not feel that their views are sufficiently taken into account. As one of the planned developments as a specialist school, a series of courses and programmes to meet the stated interests of parents are being introduced to further involve them in the school's work.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 1

The sixth form is outstanding. Although most students follow academic programmes, the school works well with partner schools to provide opportunities for some to take more practically based courses. Consequently, the sixth form meets the needs of all its students very successfully.

The sixth form provides a very supportive environment in which young women can study successfully. Students make outstanding progress in the wide number of courses they follow, preparing them very well for the next stage of their education and life in the world of work. The vast majority goes on to higher education in the institutions of their choice. Sixth form students are mature and thoughtful. They understand how they gain personally from the considerable contribution they make to the whole school, not least as effective peer mentors. Younger students spoke warmly of the support of older students.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Spread the most innovative teaching practice more widely across the school to increase the proportion of outstanding lessons.
- Provide more opportunities for parents to express their views and become involved in the school's learning community.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The attainment of girls on entry to the school is above the national average but slightly lower than in most grammar schools. Students come to the school with positive attitudes and respond quickly to the school's high expectations, so that they flourish and reach standards in external tests and GCSE examinations which are exceptionally high. This represents outstanding achievement. The progress made by students from the time they join the school until they took the national tests in Year 9 placed the school in the top 1% in the country in 2006. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those recognised as vulnerable receive the help they need so that many achieve standards higher than expected given their earlier attainment. There are no significant differences in performance across subjects. This is because any variation in the past has been quickly identified and effective action taken to bring about rapid improvement. Students' current work is of a very high standard and the school is on course to achieve the challenging targets set for its academic performance. In addition, students achieve significant success in a wide variety of extra-curricular and cultural activities, such as outdoor pursuits, school drama performances or as Millennium Volunteers.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Students' outstanding personal development ensures that they make an excellent contribution to school life and achieve high academic standards. Their care for one another is exemplary as is their understanding and caring response to the plight of others which results in a wide variety of fund-raising events. Behaviour is exemplary as a result of the very strong relationships throughout the school. Students have very well developed skills in working together in teams, both in lessons and for other activities. Good attendance levels reflect their very positive attitudes to school. The student forum makes an excellent contribution to the school community. All students feel empowered by it because representatives feed back effectively to their groups. Students know that not only are their ideas listened to and valued, but that they are actively involved in school developments. For example, the forum reported on the use of new whiteboards to help teachers understand how effectively they were being used. Students are regularly

involved in the recruitment of staff. Students understand issues relating to their own safety as a result of a well-focused personal, social and health education programme and actively seek healthy lifestyles. Although the school's sports facilities are limited, many students are involved in physical activity at lunchtime or after school. Some students make an effective contribution to other local schools as 'teachers' or sports leaders.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Students' enthusiasm for learning is reflected in teachers' desire to make lessons as interesting as possible. Students speak warmly about their teachers being approachable and parents comment appreciatively that many teachers often give of their own time to provide extra help and support. Teachers make the best of the available accommodation by making sure that classrooms are bright and displays relevant. Lessons are meticulously planned and taught. Many of the lessons seen were taking place just before external examinations and these demonstrated high expectations. This was evident in the way that students were expected to bring their existing learning to new and imaginative revision exercises. Excellent relationships mean that students are able to ask questions or offer constructive criticism of one another's work in a supportive atmosphere. Teachers' questioning is generally challenging and expectations of students high, but this is not yet consistent across the school. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection as a result of a comprehensive programme of staff development. The school is aware that this must be continued to extend the best practice more widely so that every lesson is of the highest quality already evident in the school.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The effectiveness of the curriculum is reflected in the school's stated commitment and success in inspiring 'a love of learning so that girls leave school as thoughtful, well-qualified and ambitious young women'. Students have a very broad range of learning opportunities. For example, Latin, a range of modern foreign languages and accelerated courses lead to AS qualifications in Year 11. This ensures that the needs and aspirations of all students are met successfully. The school tries to be flexible in its approach to develop a personalised curriculum. For example, additional provision is made in the sixth form to meet individual interests by making arrangements for students to follow courses through supported self-study when these are not available within the consortium. The school is not complacent and is currently undertaking an extensive review of the curriculum with a view to making further changes in 2008 to meet changing local and individual needs. A rich variety of enrichment activities is undertaken during school time and beyond the school day. These very effectively provide for specific interests and talents along with opportunities for theatre and museum visits and many wide-ranging foreign visits.

## Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Parents recognise and value the outstanding care, support and guidance for their daughters and that many staff are willing to 'go the extra mile'. The outstanding levels of pastoral care mean that personal difficulties or underperformance are picked up quickly. Students are confident that there is always someone to confide in if there are problems. Very high levels of support, often using expertise from outside agencies, provide especially good support for students identified as vulnerable, enabling them to achieve well. Students are very clear about their academic targets and how to improve, which has a very positive impact on their self-confidence and progress overall. Careers guidance is particularly effective in the sixth form.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The school is exceptionally well led by the senior team and middle managers. The headteacher gives a strong lead and has, in a relatively short time, developed the strengths already in the school to improve standards further. Staff morale is high because teamwork is strong and individuals feel valued and supported and challenged in equal measure. Staff are well qualified for their roles and recruitment is careful and effective, so that students make very good progress. Students' ongoing progress is monitored regularly and data are analysed rigorously. Staff are relentless in striving for ongoing improvements and there is a well-developed culture of self-evaluation and openness to share good practice so that evaluation is accurate. When any weaknesses are identified they are addressed quickly and effectively. Although there are regular newsletters, the school recognises that it needs to find more ways to communicate with parents and carers to ensure that all feel fully consulted and involved in the school's development. Statutory requirements are fully met and arrangements for students' safety are well documented and up to date. Governors are knowledgeable, support the school very well and are fully conversant with developments and progress to inform their strategic responsibilities. These strengths, together with the strong track record in sustaining high standards over time, ensure that the school has an excellent capacity for further improvement.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

17 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Dover Grammar School for Girls, Dover, CT16 2PZ

I write to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection of your school. First, I want to thank you for your warm welcome and the contribution you made to the inspection by talking to us about your perceptions of the school. Most of your parents commented very positively in response to our questionnaire. Since the last inspection when the school was judged to be good there have been more improvements. We agree with you that DGGS is an outstanding school.

Here are some of the main findings from our report.

- The school is a very calm and harmonious place for you to learn and socialise with your friends.
- The curriculum and extra activities offer you outstanding opportunities and you take these up with enthusiasm.
- Excellent teaching supports you to achieve exceptionally well and reach very high standards in public examinations.
- You have mature and well-developed personal and social skills which will serve you well in your future life.
- You clearly enjoy your studies and make an impressive contribution to the school and local community.
- Teachers and support staff provide you with outstanding care and guidance and value your hard work in lessons.
- The headteacher and other managers lead the school exceptionally well.

There are a couple of ways in which we think the school could improve still further and the headteacher agrees.

- Spread the most interesting teaching more widely across the school.
- Find more ways for your parents to express their views so that they feel more involved in the school.

Best wishes for the future, particularly to all of you who will be sitting examinations soon.

Helen Hutchings Lead inspector