

Poole Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113909
Local Authority	Poole
Inspection number	325912
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Christopher Wood HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	12–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	968
Sixth form	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jon Howe
Headteacher	Ian Carter
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
School address	Gravel Hill Poole BH17 9JU
Telephone number	01202 692132
Fax number	01202 606500

Age group	12–18
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Inspection number	325912

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Poole Grammar School is a consistently oversubscribed selective grammar school for boys. Although average in overall size, it has a large sixth form. Almost all pupils are from a White British background, with very few from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of educational needs, is also well below that seen nationally.

The school has been a designated specialist mathematics and computing college since 2003 and was awarded a second specialism, in cognition and learning, in 2007. The school gained Trust status in 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Poole Grammar School is forward thinking and outward looking. A tangible ethos of 'personal excellence through commitment and service' is at the core of everything it does. It provides a good standard of education for all learners and has many outstanding attributes. As one parent astutely commented, 'The boys' welfare matters to the staff. There is a good balance between academic excellence and other activities and teachers provide positive role models.'

The headteacher and his senior team provide strong and unwavering leadership and they are well supported by middle leaders. The governing body is highly skilled and offers a good level of support and challenge. The areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been addressed successfully and there is good capacity to improve further. The main and secondary specialisms make a significant contribution to the school's success and have been central to many of its most recent improvements. In particular, outstanding collaborative links with other schools and organisations benefit teachers, pupils and the local community.

The personal development and well-being of all learners are outstanding because of the exceptionally high quality care, guidance and support that they receive and as a result of the excellent curriculum. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is demonstrated through their exemplary attendance and good behaviour. They feel safe because they trust teachers and have confidence in the school's well-developed systems. Leadership and responsibility are nurtured and there are many opportunities for pupils to make a positive contribution. Pupils adopt extremely healthy lifestyles and participate fully in a wide range of sporting activities; the school's sportsmen and teams are frequently successful in local, regional and national competitions. The standards achieved by learners are high and pupils in the school and students in the sixth form make good progress. This, coupled with excellent provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and high quality careers education, means that they are extremely well prepared for their future lives.

Teaching is good, with a gradually rising proportion of outstanding lessons. In the best lessons pupils make rapid progress because teaching is matched well to their needs and abilities and there is a good balance between collaborative and independent learning. In some lessons, pupils are not fully engaged because the pace of learning is too slow and there are insufficient opportunities to take initiative. In these lessons, assessment is not used well enough to enable pupils to know how to improve their work or achieve their full potential. Accurate school self-evaluation and monitoring have identified these areas for improvement and decisive actions are beginning to have a positive impact.

A high number of parental questionnaires were returned. The vast majority of parents were very supportive of the school, commending the dedication of staff and the quality and breadth of extra-curricular opportunities, which enable their children to mature into confident and well-rounded young men. As one parent commented, 'Our four children have all had different strengths and weaknesses and have all been supported and developed by the school. As a result they have thrived.'

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Sixth formers are personable and discerning young men, intensely loyal to their school. Their personal development is outstanding because of the excellent curriculum and the exceptional

care, guidance and support which the school provides. Achievement in the sixth form is good. Students make particularly good progress in some subjects, but this is not consistent across all areas. Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. The curriculum provides an excellent range of academic courses and recently, the introduction of the 'Extended Project' has provided additional challenge for students of all abilities. Students also appreciate the extensive range of sporting and enrichment opportunities. Sixth formers contribute well to the school community; they are role models, peer mentors, support clubs and activities for younger pupils and organise their own societies, such as the Barber's Shop Choir.

Leadership of the sixth form is good. The relatively new sixth form management team has established a strong system of tutor mentoring. The tracking of students' progress, attendance and general attitude to school is rigorous and intervention through regular one-to-one sessions is having a direct impact on students' performance. Individual performance is also monitored very well and retention rates are high.

What the school should do to improve further

- Challenge learners more consistently by encouraging active involvement in lessons and by providing opportunities for pupils to take more initiative in their learning.
- Develop the range of assessment strategies used in lessons so that all pupils are clear about what they need to do to make even better progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The standards achieved in GCSE examinations are very high and large numbers of students gain A* or A grades across a wide range of subjects. The percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is also very high. As a result of the school's decisive action, there has been a rapid increase in the proportions gaining A* or A grades in science and music. Overall, pupils make good progress during their time at school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress at a rate similar to their peers.

Standards in English, mathematics and science for Year 9 pupils have also been consistently high for several years. National comparisons are not available for the 2008 results, but school analysis shows that pupils make good progress, particularly in mathematics.

At AS and A level, standards are high for the vast majority of subjects. The progress of students, whilst good in most subjects, is satisfactory in others. However, good practice in target setting and more systematic monitoring of progress mean that the school is well placed to tackle any areas of underperformance.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils convey their opinions in a courteous and articulate manner, responding with sensitivity and tolerance to diverse issues, cultures and beliefs. In one lesson, Year 13 students spoke with authority about topics that ranged from the influence of the media on government policy to representations of men in advertising. Many are involved in the school's international programme and are aware of human rights issues around the world.

Pupils feel safe and are confident that issues such as bullying are dealt with effectively. Their enjoyment is expressed in their high attendance levels. They are eager to contribute in lessons

and are focused where teaching is good. When teaching is less challenging, small groups become inattentive. A strong commitment to healthy living is seen in the high numbers of pupils who engage in extra-curricular sport. For example, over a hundred boys take part in after-school football for non-team players. Pupils have also taken well to the healthy eating provided by the canteen. The respected school council has meaningful involvement in decision-making processes and pupils said they appreciated being consulted over the proposed new timetable. Prefects, main school leaders and peer mediators help to create an orderly environment and support younger pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

A steadily increasing proportion of lessons are outstanding. However, the school rightly acknowledges that there are inconsistencies and some lessons are not as effective as the majority. In the best lessons resources are chosen wisely and are used to stimulate and develop pupils' ideas. In these instances, teachers' explanations are concise and effective questioning consolidates and extends understanding. Pupils also enjoy the opportunity to collaborate in creative and challenging ways. In one outstanding Year 11 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils engaged fully and made rapid progress when devising questions for each other as a GCSE revision tool. In the less effective lessons a narrower range of teaching strategies is used and pupils are given fewer opportunities to take initiative for their learning.

Pupils have good attitudes to their work and are keen to be involved in formative assessment opportunities when they are offered. In the best lessons, marking is thorough and a range of teacher assessment is used to provide learners with detailed guidance on how best to secure improvement. However, this high quality feedback and guidance is not yet consistently applied across the school. Whilst most learners know their targets and understand what they need to do to achieve them, this is not the case for all.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, recognising that accommodating pupils' strengths and interests motivates them to achieve well. There are outstanding extra-curricular opportunities; these allow students to extend their talents fully in sport, music and art. Frequent educational visits such as those to Swanage Bay, Auschwitz and a biennial European art trip help pupils to see the relevance of their learning. As one Year 10 pupil commented, 'The trips are amazing and they're always linked to what you are studying in lessons.'

The school's specialism in mathematics and computing has had an outstanding impact on both the school and local communities. In Key Stage 3, pupils make accelerated progress in ICT, using industry-standard software, while working towards a GCSE short course qualification. More advanced awards can be studied in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, developing workplace skills and helping learners to secure improved future economic well-being. More able mathematicians can take GCSE examinations early, allowing them to study the subject in greater depth in the sixth form. There are outstanding collaborative links with other schools and organisations which provide extended opportunities, especially for partner primary school pupils, to engage with and enjoy mathematical activities. Other successful developments to

the curriculum, such as specific lessons in thinking skills in Year 8 and in literacy for Year 8 and Year 9, have been driven by the school's specialism in 'cognition and learning'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pastoral care is exceptional. The school ensures that pupils receive the right level of high quality support and this has a significant impact on their personal development and well-being and their achievement. As one Year 8 student commented succinctly, 'Teachers are very kind and help you a lot.' Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those who may be at risk is also outstanding. Parents value the speed with which the school responds to the needs of their children and the personalised support that they receive, although in the questionnaires a few parents felt that more general communication with the school needs to improve. Strong links with a local special school have promoted greater awareness of disability for pupils and better understanding of effective teaching methods for staff.

The school manages the transition from middle school very effectively, using information about pupils' strengths and weaknesses to tailor additional support. This effective monitoring of progress continues through the school, allowing for timely intervention. All learners are provided with very good guidance on courses and careers and are consequently well prepared for each stage of their education and future lives. All arrangements to make sure that pupils are safeguarded are taken seriously and meet current government requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is led well by the headteacher, who is supported strongly by senior and middle leaders. Together they provide a clear vision and an inclusive ethos for the school which is shared by all staff. The school knows what it is good at and where it needs to improve because self-evaluation is accurate. Consequently, improvements have been seen in a number of areas, such as the increasing number of pupils gaining the highest grades in science. On those occasions when self-evaluation is less insightful, senior leaders provide middle leaders with effective support and this means that leadership across the school is improving.

Resources are well managed and deployed efficiently, and there is good capacity to make further improvements. Whole-school procedures are fully established and the training and development of staff, underpinned by performance management, are effective. This enables staff to work purposefully towards the challenging targets that are set. Governors are actively involved in the life of the school and discharge their duties well, providing tireless support and appropriate challenge.

The school makes a good contribution to promoting community cohesion and is beginning to evaluate its impact more systematically. It understands the nature of the school community and ensures that effective action is taken to enable pupils to engage with peers from different backgrounds, for example through support for pupils with severe learning difficulties at a local special school and a project with an Inuit community in Canada.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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 learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

15 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Poole Grammar School, Poole BH17 9JU

You will remember that I visited your school recently with a team of inspectors to see how well you were doing. You go to a good school which has many outstanding aspects. We enjoyed talking to you, seeing you at work in lessons and meeting with your teachers. We were grateful for the warm welcome that you gave us and for the openness of our discussions. These are the most important things we found out:

Your teachers are rightly very proud of you and you appreciate fully the high quality support and care that they provide. You get on well together, enjoy coming to school and your attendance is excellent. You do exceptionally well in your exams and make good progress in most of your subjects. This means that you are very well prepared to move on to further study or careers. The curriculum is outstanding. You have a wide choice of courses to follow and you benefit from participating in the extensive range of activities, clubs, trips and sports that are on offer. Your sporting and cultural achievements are particularly impressive. You do lots of things to help the community and are keen to take on roles of leadership and responsibility. The school's main and secondary specialisms have a strong impact on your learning; they provide excellent opportunities to excel in mathematics and ICT. The teaching you receive is good and some is outstanding. However, in some lessons you are not given enough opportunities to use your initiative and you are not always sure what you need to do next to improve your work to the highest standard.

We have asked your headteacher to focus on two things which will make the school even better:

- Make sure that lessons are consistently more challenging by allowing you to get more involved and use your initiative.
- Use different types of assessment in lessons so that you know what you need to do to achieve your full potential.

You can help by continuing to work hard and by involving yourself fully when your teachers plan lessons that allow you to work independently or in groups.

Yours faithfully

Chris Wood

Her Majesty's Inspector