

# Northfleet School for Girls

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118788
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	339304
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 February 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sheila Browning

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>	Modern (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1143
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	217
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jean Christie
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie Wilson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Hall Road Northfleet Gravesend DA11 8AQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0844 477 2525
<b>Fax number</b>	01474 335058
<b>Email address</b>	info@northfleetgirls.kent.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors spent more than three quarters of the time looking at students' learning, observed 34 lessons, saw 35 teachers and held meetings with groups of students, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at work in students' books, monitoring records, tracking information showing students' attainment and the progress they are making, the school's improvement plans, and 84 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers, along with students' questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how leadership and management are tackling some variations in performance of girls in English and mathematics
- whether challenging targets, assessment practices and marking are sufficiently used and matched to students' abilities, levels and prior attainment
- the success of middle managers in reducing differences in subject performance
- the impact of the school's business and enterprise specialism on outcomes for students in relation to the wider community.

## Information about the school

The school is larger than average and is oversubscribed. It is non-selective in an area which has selective schools. The school has business and enterprise specialist status and through the Gravesham Excellence Cluster has many links with other education providers in the area including secondary and primary schools and a local college. The school has Healthy Schools and Investor in People awards. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. Most have specific learning needs. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is below average. The majority of students are White British with a larger than average proportion of minority ethnic students and students with English as an additional language. A small proportion are Asian British, mainly Sikh, along with an increasing number from Black African-Caribbean and eastern European backgrounds. The school is midway through a major rebuilding programme.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

### Main findings

Northfleet School for Girls is a satisfactory and improving school with significant strengths within the curriculum, care, support and guidance. Provision is enhanced by the school's specialist business and enterprise status. The innovative curriculum includes four pathway/option choices and an increasing range of vocational diplomas. Other features successfully promote students' personal development, well-being and future life skills, including strong partnerships with other providers. Students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps promote a cohesive community. These factors are why students' behaviour and attitudes are so good. Attendance is satisfactory but action taken to reduce non-attendance by sixth form students is too limited.

Satisfactory leadership and management are building on continuous school improvement. Senior leaders have managed the challenge of the rebuild exceptionally well, reducing the inevitable disruptions for staff and students. Senior leaders are clear about what needs to be done. This is driven by the headteacher, and shared by governors and leaders at all levels. Effective self-evaluation procedures and recent improvements in several aspects demonstrate a satisfactory capacity to improve. As one parent reported, 'We're very pleased with the changes in the school.' Satisfactory teaching results in most students making satisfactory progress. Assessment information is used well to trigger interventions and support for groups of targeted girls, especially in English and mathematics. However, teachers' expectations do not take full account of the prior attainment of more able girls or those at AS level. Across subjects, feedback on students' work is too variable, meaning students do not know how to improve against their targets. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by middle leaders are regular but not robustly focused on raising attainment. Whole-school planning is not always sharply focused and objectives do not consistently record high expectations in terms of students' outcomes. Governors are supportive and evaluate the school's work but are not challenging enough.

Students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is average. The proportion obtaining five GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, showed a significant increase in 2009, as did the percentage achieving vocational success. The school's own tracking data on students' progress and inspection evidence indicate improvements are sustained with many on track to exceed targets set. The gap between the achievement of the school's students and those nationally is closing despite some inconsistencies between subjects and for more able students.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise attainment and expectations, especially of the more able and AS-level students, by:
  - ensuring teachers set challenging learning tasks for more able students
  - enabling more effective target setting and sharing of good classroom practices that challenge students.
- Ensure that school improvement plans are more sharply linked to students' outcomes, including attainment, by:
  - focusing the monitoring and evaluation of leaders on assessment, targets and challenge in lesson observations
  - providing training for governors to enable them to evaluate more effectively the performance of curriculum subjects against targets
  - checking the school improvement plan is focused on raising attainment with clear, measurable targets for each objective.
- Improve attendance in the sixth form by:
  - increasing the rigour of registration and attendance monitoring procedures
  - extending effective attendance policies and procedures used in the main school
  - developing processes for recording independent study.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

After fluctuating for some years, the number of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C rose significantly in 2009. The school's own data shows this has continued in the current Year 11 and any underperformance, especially by below average and average ability girls, is reducing. However, variability in progress and attainment across and within subjects remains. Standards observed by inspectors in lessons and in students' books confirmed this variation. More able pupils occasionally miss out because of low levels of challenge or insufficiently targeted activities.

In the best lessons students respond eagerly to research and collaborative opportunities, such as in a Year 8 geography lesson where students researched information for a media news competition. Students with learning difficulties receive close-targeted support and make satisfactory progress. Students know the importance of healthy living and enjoy school, seen in their improving attendance and positive attitudes and good behaviour. Students take on responsibility as sports and business leaders, run activities and team up with local primary schools. Through whole year group activity and information days, vocational/diploma students engage with the local business community and they gain early qualifications in basic skills courses. Large numbers participate in the extra-curricular activities. Through an online international community link, they support schools and education in other countries such as India and the Gambia; this enhances their understanding of diversity.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and, in the best lessons, use this and good questioning skills and resources to motivate and engage students well. Although teachers have useful information about students' prior attainment to plan activities and tasks for all, more able girls are not always challenged. Insufficient use is made of assessment activities to check students' learning in lessons and when marking their work. Girls who require additional support are well provided for through 'The Link' and by other adults, mentors and coaching.

Functional (basic) skills and fast tracking opportunities from Year 9 help girls acquire early qualifications. Some are accelerated in mathematics and complete their GCSE in Year 10. Others follow a three-year Key Stage 4 programme in English, mathematics and separate sciences. A fast track group in Year 9 successfully completed the equivalent of a GCSE in information and communication technology in one year. The range of 14 to 19 Diplomas and vocational opportunities is increasing choices here and within the consortium. The school's specialism enabled four clear option pathway choices from traditional GCSEs to business and enterprise, foundation courses or young apprenticeships. The school's own DARE (dreams and risks education) activities in Years 7 and 8 and school wide 'Clematass' (tutor group projects and activities) have increased students' involvement and enquiry-based learning. These promote students' personal, social and emotional development and their learning and thinking skills well. Creative

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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and performing arts are integrated by combining design and technology, art, and performing arts, with a business and enterprise element. As yet many innovations are at too early a stage to have had a full impact on results.

Students like the opportunities for mixed-age groupings, as one said, 'It's like having big sisters to look after you.' The pastoral team is very responsive to students' needs with external agency connections a strong feature. Vulnerable students are particularly well served and there are examples of support which has helped them to overcome significant barriers. Targeted support, personalised learning and access to counselling and social skills sessions are particularly good. The zero tolerance approach to girls' inappropriate behaviour has resulted in a higher than average number of fixed-term exclusions. Leaders are aware that better systems and procedures are needed to tackle this so that exclusion is not used too readily. Students feel well informed and are confident about their future.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The senior and middle leadership team share the drive for improvement and are focused on some ambitious priorities. These and curriculum changes, such as the switches to modular mathematics and science and the introduction of a wider vocational curriculum, are tackling some underperformance effectively. Monitoring of teaching and learning is accurate. However, it is not sharply focused on ensuring high expectations for assessment, targets and challenge in lessons, so as to iron out the inconsistencies in girls' performance across subjects and especially for more able students. Progress towards the specialist targets is mixed.

Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures are effective; they promote equality and tackle discrimination appropriately, and have challenged the school's exclusion procedures. As a result the school is a safe community, resulting in few racist incidents and where students say they feel safe. Governors are most supportive and well informed. While they probe procedures and ask challenging questions, their evaluation of the school's performance against set targets and the evaluation of community cohesion are not as robust. Enterprise Days have focused on multicultural awareness and students have adopted and explored a country and then publicly celebrated their understanding. The business and enterprise specialism has strengthened the already wide-ranging good partnerships. These support students' learning well, and enhance the

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consortium and work in the local community.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Sixth form

Most students make satisfactory progress. Those on vocational courses make good progress and vocational pass rates are high. A2 pass rates have increased slightly since the last inspection but AS-level pass rates have declined. The school has taken appropriate actions to tackle under-performing subjects. A minority of students have low attendance and the rigour of registration and attendance monitoring procedures, including for independent study, to reduce non-attendance are too limited. Students develop sensible and mature attitudes to others, enjoy their studies and are well motivated. While most teaching and learning in lessons are satisfactory, marking of work is inconsistent with little guidance for improvement.

Students choose from a broad range of AS-level and A2 subjects and the recent addition of vocational courses increasingly meets their diverse needs. At the end of Year 11 students receive good guidance so they enrol on appropriate courses in the sixth form. Joint sixth form provision with other institutions enriches students' experiences preparing them well for the future. A majority progress to university with a few continuing in further education. The recent trend in achievement has been inconsistent and directly reflects the variance across subjects and in the limited rigour of otherwise satisfactory leadership. Managers know the key strengths and areas for improvement and have plans aimed at increasing the outcomes, but as yet sharing good practice is not embedded.



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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

## Views of parents and carers

Most parents responding to the questionnaire are happy with their child's experiences and education at school. A small minority expressed some concern about the progress their child was making and the support given to them to help support their child's learning. A small minority felt the school did not deal with unacceptable behaviour and did not take account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors judged behaviour as good and found that most students made satisfactory progress. Parents and carers feel well informed but there is no clear mechanism for them to share their views on the school and influence future developments or to involve them more fully in their child's education.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Northfleet School for Girls to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 84 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1143 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	19	57	68	10	12	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	33	54	64	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	26	50	60	9	11	3	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	27	41	49	17	20	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	18	21	55	65	10	12	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	14	52	62	15	18	3	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	12	60	71	10	12	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	15	18	49	58	9	11	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	20	53	63	11	13	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	14	49	58	13	15	8	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	6	55	65	15	18	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	21	25	44	52	11	13	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	31	45	54	6	7	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

# Glossary

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

## Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



1 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Northfleet School for Girls, Gravesend, DA11 8AQ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking with the students we met and found what you had to say very informative and relevant. Our judgement is that yours is a satisfactory school. We were impressed with your behaviour, and your attitudes to learning. Your attainment at the end of Year 11 is average and the progress you make in your work is satisfactory. Those of you involved in vocational and diploma work and A2 courses are doing especially well.

- The opportunities you have through the specialist status have greatly improved the curriculum and it is a strength of the school.
- You told us how much you enjoyed the activity and information days and how they help improve your skills and studies.
- Teaching is satisfactory, your progress is tracked well and those of you needing extra support benefit from some good provision.
- You are cared for and supported well and you told us how much you appreciate all the recent improvements, especially the new buildings.

Your headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to improve your school and they know there are areas for improvement. We have asked them to:

- raise attainment and teachers' expectations, especially of the more able, and ensure greater challenge in teaching and learning across the school and for AS students
- focus leaders and managers on securing high expectations and ensuring all school plans are always sharply focused on outcomes, including attainment
- improve the attendance in the sixth form.

You can help by continuing to work hard and letting teachers know when you do not understand how to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Browning

Lead Inspector

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