

Dover Grammar School for Boys

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118931
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339327
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Clare Gillies

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	757
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Donald
Headteacher	Sally Lees
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2007
School address	Astor Avenue Dover CT17 0DQ
Telephone number	01304 206117
Fax number	01304 206074
Email address	slees@dovergramboys.kent.sch.uk

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

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Thirty-six lessons were observed, 36 teachers seen and meetings were held with parents, groups of students, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised policies, monitoring information, data about past and present standards and progress, the school improvement plan and the School Improvement Partner's notes. The team analysed the 178 parental questionnaires and those completed by staff and students.

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

- actions taken by the school to improve the percentage of high grades at GCSE and A levels, and predictions for 2010 results
- the degree to which the school's focus on assessment for learning and more varied teaching styles has generated better learning and higher achievement for all students, especially more able ones.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average school. It has just over one-fifth of its students in the sixth form, which includes a small number of girls. Since September 2006, the school has had business and enterprise specialist status. A well below average proportion of students take free school meals. Very few boys have special educational needs and/or disabilities and learning difficulties. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, with a smaller percentage whose first language is not English. The school is the base for Dover Extended Services, running a Saturday morning academy, adult learning courses and holiday schools and has young chamber (school council) status. The school is co-sponsoring a new academy in Dover, opening in September 2010.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school because GCSE results are high and A level results have gone up every year since the last inspection. Students make at least good and, in some subjects, outstanding progress. Just as important is how successfully the school prepares students for their futures. Students develop into mature and thoughtful citizens, able to cope with challenges. The school's specialism in business and enterprise is reflected in the excellent development of students' team work, leadership and enterprise skills.

The care and guidance students receive are outstanding so it is not surprising the great majority say they enjoy school, feel safe and that adults care about them. Boys mostly behave very well in lessons and around the school but, just occasionally, they chatter too much or lack concentration so that learning slows down, particularly if teachers do not stick to behaviour control routines. Through several groups, the school hears and respects students' opinions and ideas. One student group, including some parents, meets regularly to share its ideas on the planned new buildings. Students achieve extremely well in many other areas such as sports, music and contributing to school and local community life. These develop their social skills and ability to get on with people from different backgrounds. A parent told inspectors that her son, now at university, realised and appreciated that his education had given him an understanding of diversity and respect for everyone whatever their background.

A significant strength is the rich curriculum which is constantly reviewed to reflect boys' interests and aspirations. As well as the recent successful introduction of the International Baccalaureate, links with the Dover consortium widen choices for sixth formers. Students are spoiled for choice by the exceptional range of extra-curricular activities, from sports to Greek or choir to Yu-Gi-Oh.

Standards have improved since the last inspection, with an increased number of more able students achieving their full potential. The percentage of GCSE A*/A grades has risen to over 30 per cent but it varies between subjects, from over 50 per cent to below 20 per cent. Variation also exists in the sixth form, with 60% A/B grades in psychology but less in several other subjects. The school has yet to achieve all students attaining five or more GCSE A*-C grades including English and mathematics.

Boys learn well because teaching is practically always good or better and they now spend more time working in pairs and groups, discussing and sharing ideas and gaining confidence to tackle research and tasks independently. Teachers know exactly how well individual students are doing and most, but not all, of them set and mark homework regularly, give constructive feedback about what students need to do to improve and

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ensure that they have the confidence to aim for the highest grades.

The school's capacity to improve is excellent. Many parents and staff observe that the school has improved significantly in the last few years. The school knows itself well and is reflective and self-critical; its development plan is concise and realistic with clear targets for all aspects of its work. The headteacher has fostered distributive leadership by encouraging staff and students to suggest improvements, put forward ideas for initiatives and take risks trying out innovative plans. This has generated strong staff morale and they feel proud to work at the school.

The governing body is the only one in Kent to have achieved recognition for its outstanding work and contribution to school life. It combines unwavering support with strong demands to see action taken, for example if a particular subject is not performing well enough. With hardworking and focused leadership teams, well-planned finances and a strong teaching force, the school is set to go from strength to strength.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve GCSE results by:
 - sharing the existing good practice in verbal and written feedback and advice on how to improve work given to students
 - for all subjects, setting and achieving challenging targets, especially for A*/A grades
 - raising boys' confidence so they aspire to achieve the highest grades, and
 - eliminating any minor lapses in boys' concentration in lessons by applying the behaviour policy consistently.
- Improve sixth form results by:
 - eliminating the variation in performance between subjects, and
 - supporting experienced and relatively new subject leaders and heads of house to motivate students to aim for the highest grades.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Learning is good in practically all lessons and often outstanding. The atmosphere in lessons is one of mutual respect, humour and trust. Students respond to the good teaching by high attendance levels, enjoying most of their lessons, working hard and eagerly contributing when asked questions. Boys with special educational needs and/or disabilities or learning difficulties and those who are looked after achieve at least as well as their peers and the very few non-White British students achieve very well.

Achievement and enjoyment in extra-curricular activities is very evident. With high standards in English and mathematics, strong computer skills and the influence of the school's business specialism, boys are well prepared for future studies, work and economic well-being.

The well-established vertical tutor groups have contributed to a reduction in the

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relatively few instances of bullying, and racist incidents are extremely rare. Nevertheless, almost two out of five students do not feel behaviour in the school is good though inspectors saw them working in an exemplary manner in many lessons. The young chamber is a strong force and its members discuss a wide range of school issues, including the layout and use of planners and the variable effectiveness of personal development time. The latter is not planned thoroughly and an opportunity to develop students' appreciation of citizenship is missed.

Boys are generous in raising funds for charity and have a strong appreciation of the needs of others less well off than themselves; Amnesty International and fair trade groups flourish. With two traditional assemblies a week, religious studies education lessons which address ethical and moral issues, and community service in the sixth form, students' appreciation and understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of their lives is excellent. In July 2009, a three-day cross-curricular activity, 'Believe it or not,' stimulated much discussion and thought. A parent wrote that her son had experienced 'life-altering experiences'.

The school has many regional and national successes in football, athletics and indoor rowing competitions, for example. One third of students do not feel the school helps them to be healthy though they are fully aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, and relationships and drugs education have a high profile.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

¹ 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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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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How effective is the provision?

Enthusiastic teachers succeed in breaking up lessons with stimulating activities and different ways of working. Many teachers use the interactive whiteboards effectively, particularly to show relevant video clips and pictures. The keen focus on aiming for the highest standards benefits the very able boys, although in mixed ability classes, not all work was customised to boys' different abilities. Teachers do pose questions at different levels and students relish a good debate. Teachers' recent focus on how to use assessment data to improve learning, quality questioning and feedback has contributed to rising standards. GCSE and A level results in 2010, confirmed by the inspection, are set to be higher.

As well as the popular option of Latin, boys can study a wide range of modern foreign languages. One Year 8 class learns geography and history in French, an exciting pilot that is generating high standards in these subjects. Also in Year 8, linked to the school's specialism, students have an enterprise lesson learning, for example, how businesses operate financially. Through citizenship, they study a wide range of topical issues.

Several parents of boys with special educational needs and/or disabilities or learning difficulties commented on the high quality of help and information they receive. Three learning mentors and support assistants contribute significantly to boys' happiness by having time to listen and offer support. Boys feel confident there is someone they can talk to if they have concerns about themselves or others.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection, target setting and monitoring of students' past and present standards and progress have become more effective. Online tracking and colour coding effectively highlights where intervention is needed. Students work well with staff to discuss how their work is assessed. 'Learning conversations' with students about their targets have generated improved standards.

The expertise within the leadership team contributes to the school's success and its community work. Examples include the school leading the local Enterprise Learning Partnership and its co-sponsorship of the new Dover academy. The young chamber has

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ambitious plans to develop a youth hub in the centre of Dover. Over 100 pupils from 24 schools attended sessions at the Easter holiday school in 2010.

The school is heavily involved in the local community, offering family learning courses in its Saturday morning academy, working with the Dover Youth Theatre, Dover Council and the Chamber of Commerce and supporting local schools. Combined with numerous educational contacts and strong overseas links, acknowledged by the school's international status award, the school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding.

The relentless focus on raising standards permeates the headteacher's and governors actions, evidenced by the improved results since the last inspection. Several subject leaders have well-honed analytical skills and the positive impact of recently appointed leaders in mathematics and science is evident. Senior leaders have an accurate view of where teaching and learning are particularly effective and design training for staff based on their observations of lessons and discussions with teachers.

The school does a great deal to contact parents, particularly those who are hesitant about keeping in touch. The school is keen for parents to support their sons' work so that equality of opportunity is the same for all families, whatever their backgrounds. This aspiration permeates the school's work, with all aspects of diversity being welcomed and celebrated, and discrimination never tolerated.

The school maintains strong links with outside agencies and the headteacher chairs the local children's services partnership. Students transfer smoothly from primary school. The school takes its safeguarding duties extremely seriously and rigorously checks legislation and health and safety requirements. A few minor points related to policy wording and checklists were raised by the inspection and sorted immediately.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

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Sixth form

The success of the sixth form is seen in high retention rates and the fact that all students proceed to university (about 85%), further education, training or work. Girls feel welcomed, enjoy being in the sixth form and several of them achieve higher A level results than boys. Whether following the International Baccalaureate or A levels, all students are expected to undertake 150 hours of community service within or beyond school. Prefects describe their roles as to model excellent academic standards as well as high quality behaviour. Many enjoy supporting younger students in their vertical tutor groups. Supported by the school's specialism, several students run successful mini-businesses.

Sports studies students carried out a project where they decided and organised how they would study a particular unit of work; they are convinced their learning improved. All students study theory of knowledge or AS citizenship which broadens their studies. Teaching and learning are often outstanding, with superb preparation for examinations combined with confidence building. Students appreciate their teachers' subject expertise and enjoy high quality debates and discussions. They are expected to use the correct subject vocabulary at all times.

Leadership and management is organised by the deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher and heads of houses. Sixth formers, and some of their parents, feel that they are extremely well supported and they experience the same high quality care for academic and non-academic needs as boys in the main school. The schools careers advice has been externally validated as 'green' and practically all students feel they are guided well in making university and career choices.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Nearly one quarter of the parents completed the questionnaires and their responses were very positive. Several praised staff for their excellent teaching and described the high quality support their sons receive. A few parents observed that the sports facilities are not good enough, which is true and a concern shared by the governors and staff. A very small minority of parents wrote that boys' behaviour occasionally interrupts learning. Inspectors saw a very few lessons when this happened and, combined with the boy's own observations on their behaviour, feel that, despite being exemplary in many

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lessons, behaviour is not yet outstanding.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dover Grammar School for Boys 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 178 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 757 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	37	106	60	4	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	59	33	113	64	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	93	52	79	44	5	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	72	40	89	50	10	6	4	2
The teaching is good at this school	68	38	104	58	4	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	25	119	67	11	6	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	21	118	66	16	9	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)	57	32	93	52	7	4	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	62	35	100	56	9	5	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	31	95	53	14	8	5	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	22	104	58	16	9	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	78	44	91	51	6	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	89	50	78	44	7	4	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



13 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Dover Grammar School for Boys, Dover CT17 0DQ

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We much enjoyed talking to many of you and wish we had had more time to meet all of you. Yours is an outstanding school, partly because you are taught well and you achieve high standards in examinations, particularly at GCSE, but also because the school helps you to mature into thoughtful and mature people who are ready to face university, training and the world of work. As well as academic success, many of you achieve in other ways, in sports, music and running mini-businesses, for example.

The school gives you excellent support and care and a most impressive range of extra-curricular activities and subjects to study, including the International Baccalaureate in the sixth form. Interesting elements of the curriculum include subjects being taught in French and the enterprise lessons in Year 8. We certainly felt that the business and enterprise specialism makes a difference to your outlook on the world of work and your futures.

We were most impressed with the number of you, including prefects, who take on responsibilities and contribute to the young chamber and other discussion groups. It is excellent that your views on the new building are being sought. We got the impression that most of you are happy with the vertical tutor groups, although we agree with you that personal development time could be used more productively. Your behaviour and concentration is exemplary in many lessons but, as you acknowledged in the questionnaires, just occasionally it is not so strong and your progress is held back. You know what you can do about that!

Even outstanding schools have things that could be better. We have asked your school to increase the percentage of high GCSE and A level grades. We have suggested that teachers develop and expand the verbal and written feedback and advice for improvement which they give you about your work. You can play your part by being determined to get the top grades and working hard to achieve them.

We hope that your future lives will be successful and happy.

Yours sincerely

Clare Gillies

Additional Inspector

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