

Borden Grammar School

Avenue of Remembrance, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 4DB

Inspection dates 12–13 November 2013

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| | This inspection: | Good 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding 1 |
| Leadership and management | | Good 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- All staff share the headteacher’s ambitious vision which focuses on the achievement of every student within a highly supportive and harmonious community.
- Supported by good leadership and management, students’ achievement is good and improving because of good and improving teaching.
- Parents, staff and students are exceptionally positive about the standards of behaviour and safety in the school. Students arrive at their lessons hungry to learn and engage enthusiastically with classroom activities. Relationships between teachers and students are very positive and help to promote high quality learning.
- The school’s leaders, including the governors, know their school well and what needs to be done to improve it still further.
- The school’s curriculum is broad and balanced and it is successful in meeting the needs and aspirations of all students. This helps the students to enjoy their learning, appreciate its relevance and achieve well. The school provides its students with excellent cultural and sporting opportunities.
- The sixth form is good; its students serve as excellent role models to younger students in the school. Students’ achievement in the sixth form is good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In mathematics, not all students make the best possible progress from their starting points.
- Some teachers do not use marking or questioning as effectively as they could and this means that in some lessons students do not always make good progress.
- Some teachers do not make the best use of the information about students’ progress to plan their lessons. As a result, activities and expectations are sometimes not hard enough, particularly in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 38 lessons, a number of which were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. They also looked at the quality of teachers’ marking and the extent to which this is helping students to improve.
- Inspectors met with three groups of students to discuss their experience of school, and particularly their learning, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors met with four members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a number of groups of school leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed a number of documents including: minutes of the meetings of the governing body; safety procedures; behaviour and attendance records; documents relating to school self-review and improvement; and the school’s records on performance management and teaching and learning.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, inspectors took account of 168 responses to the Parent View survey and 63 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Graham Tuck, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Angela Podmore | Additional Inspector |
| Jennifer Bray | Additional Inspector |
| Roger Fenwick | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-size secondary school.
- The school selects from the top 25% of boys by ability using the Kent test to determine admission into Year 7.
- Borden Grammar School converted to become an academy in January 2012. When its predecessor school, also Borden Grammar School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- The school's headteacher has been in post since September 2013.
- The school has a specialism in sport and a second specialism in modern languages.
- Approximately one in ten of the school's population is eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided for children in local authority care, children of service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals. This proportion is about a third of the national average. There are no children from service families currently on the school's roll.
- There are no students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium, which is provided by the government to support those students who have not previously reached the expected levels in English and mathematics.
- Approximately one in nine students is from a minority ethnic group, which is below the national average.
- A little over 10% of students are disabled or have special educational needs and are supported through school action, this proportion is a little below the national average. A little under 4% of students are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs, which is about half the national average.
- Some additional AS- and A-level courses are taken by sixth form students at Fulston Manor School and Highsted Grammar School. This is so that these students can follow courses that are of particular interest or relevance to them.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that systems for tracking and monitoring the progress of students are rigorously applied across the school, and particularly in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding in order to accelerate the progress of students, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - make better use of assessment data to plan their lessons so that students are fully stretched and challenged
 - use questioning more effectively to check students' progress and to develop their thinking
 - provide students with more opportunities to act upon their teachers' feedback so that marking makes a greater impact on their learning and progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the school with levels of attainment that are well above the national average. They have made good progress from their starting points since the school opened in most of their subjects throughout the school and, as a result, achieve well in their GCSE examinations. For example, for the last two years, 92% of students have attained five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics, and in 2013 just over 30% attained five or more A* and A grades. However, in mathematics in 2013, not all students made the best possible progress, taking into account their starting points when the school opened. The school has taken swift, appropriate and effective action to address this.
- In the 2012 GCSE examinations, students supported by the pupil premium attained a little above all other students in English and about a third of a grade below all others in mathematics. The school has made effective use of pupil premium funding, for example by employing a welfare officer to support those students who find attendance at school difficult.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are well supported and their progress is carefully monitored. As a result, they make good progress and achieve at least as well as other students.
- Students are encouraged to read widely and often. For example, at tutor time they are given the opportunity to read, and at breaks and lunchtimes the library is a particularly busy place, with students undertaking a variety of purposeful activities including private reading. In English, students are introduced early on to appropriately challenging literary texts and reading for research, and investigation is encouraged across the curriculum.
- As a result of good teaching and high quality support, students in the sixth form, including those who attend other settings for part of their studies, make good progress. For example, in 2012, although attainment on entry into the sixth form had been a little below the national average, the percentage attaining the highest grades compared very favourably with national figures.
- Over 90% of the many parents and careers who responded to the Parent View survey agreed that their children make good progress in the school, almost half strongly agreed.
- Students from minority ethnic groups make progress that is at least as good as that of all other students in the school.

There were no students entered early for GCSE examinations in the 2012/13 academic year.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The relationship between teachers and students is a particularly strong feature of the school and helps to ensure that there is an exceptionally positive climate for learning. Students arrive to their lessons keen and ready to learn and respond enthusiastically when given the opportunity to work in groups. For example, in one outstanding Year 9 English lesson, students worked together on developing a satirical piece. In their discussions, they were able to analyse the techniques of satirical writing and apply this to their own work. With little prompting from the teacher they moved from writing into rehearsing and performing and were quick to offer thoughtful feedback on each other's ideas.
- Teachers display good subject knowledge and in the best lessons use this to engage and inspire the students. In a Year 13 chemistry lesson, students were able to develop a clear understanding of the electron flow between two solutions because of the teacher's clarity of explanation and depth of expertise. In a Year 13 history class, the teacher used this expertise to challenge the students' thinking and develop their powers of explanation and analysis.
- Where teachers plan their lessons well, students of all abilities make strong progress. In an outstanding Year 8 French lesson, more-able students were used as student interpreters to support others in the group. As a result, all made rapid progress in a mutually supportive atmosphere. However, in some lessons, planning is less effective because insufficient use is

made of the assessment information about students on the school's tracking and monitoring systems and, as a result, students are not stretched or challenged enough.

- Students' work is generally marked thoroughly and conscientiously, and most students receive helpful comments on what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Where this is most effective, students are given time to respond to these comments so that they can build improvements into their future work. However, this good practice is not consistently applied across the school.
- In many lessons, questioning is used effectively to develop students' understanding and support their progress. For example, in an outstanding Year 9 handball lesson, skilful questioning by the teacher encouraged students to share their ideas about how their skills could be developed. There was a strong culture of students listening to each other and taking account of any criticism in order to improve their performance. In those lessons where the questioning is less effective, teachers often accept simple responses, involve too few students or fail to ask students to clarify their thinking. On these occasions, students' progress is more limited.
- As a result of effective joint planning by teachers and teaching assistants, disabled students and those with special educational needs are well supported in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students display a fierce pride in their school. This is reflected in their immaculate appearance and how they conduct themselves, moving courteously and respectfully between lessons and at breaks and lunchtimes. In busy areas, such as the dining hall and the library, their behaviour is excellent.
- Students feel very safe and say that bullying of any form is extremely rare. Initiatives such as anti-bullying ambassadors, anti-bullying week assemblies and drama productions help to ensure that students have a clear understanding of the different types of bullying, including cyber bullying, and what to do if they encounter it. Students confirmed that the few incidents of bullying that do occur are dealt with very effectively by the school. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers agreed that students are happy and safe in school.
- Students are extremely keen to learn, arrive punctually to lessons and, when given responsibility for their learning, accept this with relish. They listen attentively, both to the teacher and to their peers, and are respectful of the ideas and opinions of others. Lessons are able to flow without interruption and any rare incident of inattentiveness is effectively managed by teachers.
- Students' behaviour throughout the sixth form, including that of those who attend other settings for part of their studies, is outstanding. Students play an important part in supporting younger students in the school and act as excellent role models, for example by organising charity events and coaching junior sports teams.
- Attendance is very high compared with national averages; exclusion is used rarely, but has a positive impact on the few students with poor behaviour.
- Students are highly appreciative of the wide range of cultural activities and events that the school provides. These include numerous trips abroad, music and drama productions and a range of sports competitions. A student council plays an important part in school life and students have good opportunities to discuss their ideas for change.

The leadership and management are good

- Central to the school's success is the headteacher's strong focus on the quality of teaching and the achievement of every student. In this he has the full support of his senior team and staff. School leaders have a precise understanding of their school's strengths and areas for development, including the relative weakness in students' progress in mathematics. This understanding informs the school's priorities for future action which are set out in a highly

effective school improvement plan.

- The school's procedures for the management of staff performance are rigorously applied and the quality of teaching is closely linked to teachers' salaries and progression. A thorough training programme is in place and this has already brought about improvements in the quality of teaching.
 - The school's curriculum is very well matched to the interests and abilities of the students. As a result, they are very well placed to take the next steps in their education, training or employment. Sixth form students are highly appreciative of the excellent advice and guidance that they receive. Their curriculum is further enriched by the additional courses held at two local secondary schools.
 - New systems for monitoring students' progress have recently been introduced, but these are not yet used effectively and consistently by all teachers in their planning of lessons.
 - Staff morale is very high, as is demonstrated by the exceptionally positive response in staff questionnaires. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey agreed that the school is well led and managed.
 - The school is very effective in promoting students' spiritual, moral and cultural development. Tutor time and assemblies play an important part in this process. In one inspirational Key Stage 4 assembly, students were able to reflect on the significance of Remembrance Day through the reading of poems set against images of war. The powerful message, 'It's a story of people, not a story of war', was underpinned by quotations from former world leaders including Sir Winston Churchill and J F Kennedy.
 - The school is a harmonious community and there is a commitment by leaders at all levels to promote equality of opportunity. The performance of different groups of students is monitored closely to ensure that all achieve the best they can.
 - The school's arrangements for safeguarding students, including those who attend other settings, meet statutory requirements.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a clear insight into the school's strengths and weaknesses and are prepared to identify and challenge any areas of underperformance: as, for example, when the progress of some students in mathematics was slower than that of their peers. Where strategies have been put in place for improvement, governors monitor their impact through regular meetings, attending presentations from senior and middle leaders, and making visits to the school. They receive regular reports on the school's performance management processes and ensure that any pay progression is linked to the quality of teaching. Governors are knowledgeable and informed and review their own training and the impact that this has on their effectiveness. For example, as a result of a recent self-review, governors have determined to increase their skills in analysing school achievement data and develop more effective systems for gauging the views of the students. Governors ensure that financial and other resources are managed properly and that they provide good value for money; they receive reports on pupil premium spending and the impact that this has on students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care. They take full account of a range of data, including those provided by Ofsted's school data dashboard, to compare the school's performance to that of similar schools and schools nationally. The governing body fulfils all of its statutory duties, including those relating to safeguarding.
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What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 137800 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 426642 |

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

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| Type of school | Academy converter |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Boys |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 795 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 198 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Phillip Bromwich |
| Headteacher | Jonathan Hopkins |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 01795 424192 |
| Fax number | 01795 424026 |
| Email address | school@bordengrammar.kent.sch.uk |

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