

Oakwood Park Grammar School

Oakwood Park, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8AH

Inspection dates

6 to 7 February 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and his senior team demonstrate clarity of purpose, warmth and a determination to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils' attainment in most subjects at key stage 4 is typically well above national averages. Pupils' progress from their starting points is broadly average because too few of the most able pupils achieve the highest grades in their examinations.
- Teaching is good overall and continues to improve. Teachers plan challenging activities and ask probing questions that make pupils think. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who are disadvantaged, are well cared for and achieve increasingly well because additional funding is used appropriately.
- Pupils are safe and have been taught how to keep themselves safe from a range of risks. All staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and know what to do if they are concerned about a child.
- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils are tolerant, thoughtful and have a keen appreciation of the values of democracy within a diverse society.
- Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from outstanding opportunities to develop their attitudes, personal interests and leadership skills.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Pupils are polite and take great pride in their school, their appearance and their work.
- Students in the sixth form make exceptionally strong progress because their teachers provide them with consistently high levels of challenge. Students also play a full role in the life of the school and receive excellent advice on their next steps.
- Governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They hold the headteacher and his team stringently to account for pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders at all levels have high expectations. However, they do not always evaluate the impact of their actions precisely enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eradicate any remaining variability in the quality of teaching.
- Ensure that all pupils, in particular those with high prior attainment, make above-average progress in their learning by the time they reach the end of key stage 4.
- Sharpen leaders' evaluation of the impact of their actions so that they plan next steps that are more precisely focused on areas that will make the most difference to pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and his senior team have responded energetically to the unexpected dip in pupils' outcomes in 2017. They have rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching and on ensuring that more pupils obtain the highest grades in their GCSE examinations. As a result, pupils made better progress in 2018, in line with national averages. However, leaders are not complacent. They have successfully raised the expectations of staff, bringing about an even sharper focus on the progress that pupils make in all subjects and all year groups.
- Subject leaders play an increasingly important role in school improvement. Senior leaders have invested in training for them, providing individual coaching where necessary. Consequently, subject leaders feel very well supported in their roles, which they carry out conscientiously and enthusiastically. However, leaders' evaluations of the impact of their actions lack precision. Consequently, their plans for next steps are not yet sharply focused enough on those actions that will make the most difference.
- The headteacher is a highly visible and approachable presence around the school. He has won the trust and confidence of pupils and staff alike. Staff say that they feel valued, and that leaders take account of their workload when making decisions. One teacher said, 'Working here has made me fall in love with teaching again.'
- Staff benefit from training that is closely matched to their needs. They speak very highly of the coaching they receive from senior leaders and of the opportunities they have to work with colleagues to moderate their assessments of pupils' work and engage in joint planning.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders are clear about their curriculum aims to provide academically challenging programmes of study that will allow pupils to go on to further study in whatever area they choose. Pupils speak highly of the range of subjects on offer to them when they make their option choices for GCSE. Teachers enrich the curriculum with interesting trips and visits that deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Leaders have rightly recognised the need to develop the curriculum further. In order that pupils can make a flying start to their GCSE courses, leaders have made sensible changes to the Year 9 curriculum, which will take effect from September 2019. In addition, leaders have provided time for staff to develop new schemes of work for this year group. Staff value this opportunity to engage in curriculum development and are committed to the success of this initiative.
- Additional funding to support the learning and progress of pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged is used effectively. Leaders identify pupils' barriers to learning accurately and work assiduously to overcome them. Arrangements for monitoring the impact of the expenditure are not yet fully developed, however.
- Leaders make sure that pupils have access to a rich extra-curricular experience. Pupils benefit from many lunchtime and after-school clubs. For example, they can choose to deepen their knowledge in the robot club, learn to frame an argument in the debating club or take up a new sport in the fencing or rowing clubs. Similarly, pupils are

encouraged to develop their talents through opportunities to learn musical instruments, perform in dramatic productions or represent the school in sporting and other competitions.

- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain. Through assemblies, religious education lessons and in personal, social, health and economics education, pupils learn about British values and develop the attributes of tolerance, compassion and understanding needed in a diverse society. Pupils also learn about issues of gender equality, consent and maintaining healthy relationships. In addition, they develop a sense of responsibility for others through charity fundraising and volunteering. During inter-faith week, pupils had the opportunity to describe their religious belief to each other.
- Leaders make sure that pupils receive accurate and impartial careers advice. Although over four fifths of pupils stay on into the sixth form, they attend presentations from local further education colleges, receiving information about other post-16 providers to help them make informed choices about their future.
- Around nine out of ten parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, expressed confidence in how the school deals with behaviour, bullying and their children's safety. Over 90% would recommend the school to another parent.

Governance of the school

- Governors demonstrate strong commitment to the school. A recent round of elections means that all positions on the governing body are filled. A governor takes responsibility for training and ensures that all governors have accessed appropriate training, including for safeguarding.
- Statutory responsibilities are carried out diligently. Governors monitor the use of additional funding and ask increasingly challenging questions about the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' progress, including pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged.
- Governors do not take leaders' accounts of improvement at face value but visit the school to talk to staff and pupils and observe at first hand the running of the school. As a result, they have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and use this understanding to hold the headteacher and his senior team to account.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils' welfare and well-being has a very high priority, and there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Pupils trust their teachers and have the confidence to talk to them about any concerns they may have.
- Leaders ensure that the school is compliant with all current safeguarding regulations and guidelines. Vetting checks on staff and volunteers are carried out carefully, and record-keeping is scrupulous.
- Staff have received appropriate training in safeguarding, which includes, for example,

training on radicalisation, child sexual exploitation and county lines. As a result, staff have a secure knowledge of the potential risks their pupils face and recognise the need to be vigilant at all times. Staff understand the clear procedures in place for reporting safeguarding concerns, and how to use them.

- The school's designated safeguarding leaders are tenacious in ensuring that pupils receive the necessary support when there is a need to involve external agencies. Leaders keep careful records of all such cases and store these records securely.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Where teaching over time is most effective, pupils make very strong progress in their learning. Teachers make efficient use of assessment information to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses. They use their expert subject knowledge to plan challenging activities that enable pupils to successfully connect what they already know and understand to new concepts.
- Teachers' own passion for their subjects enthuses and inspires pupils. Teachers create a scholarly environment in which pupils develop curiosity and a genuine thirst for learning. Pupils love discussions, contributing enthusiastically and thoughtfully to them. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson on the periodic table, a pupil exclaimed, 'Atoms can't just be there; they must be made of *something*.'
- Questioning is used extremely well to guide pupils through challenging material. Teachers require pupils to explain and justify their answers, which in turn deepens their understanding and builds their confidence. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, a group of most-able pupils developed their understanding of algebra through a combination of intense practice and precise questioning by the teacher.
- For the most part, teachers follow the school's assessment policy closely, giving pupils clear information on how to improve their work and then giving them time to make the necessary changes. Pupils value this feedback. They are also highly appreciative of the time teachers are prepared to invest in explaining and going over new material, both in lessons and at lunchtimes or after school.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and cordial. Pupils are polite and respectful to their teachers. Pupils display highly positive attitudes to their learning, paying attention to their teachers, studying as hard as they can and taking pride in their work. Most pupils complete their homework on time and to a high standard. The vast majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire believe that their children receive homework that is appropriate for their age.
- While teaching over time is generally highly effective, there is some variability in its quality. In a small number of cases, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable, because the work set is not matched closely enough to their needs. In these instances, tasks are not challenging enough and questions are insufficiently probing. Consequently, pupils do not develop the sustained knowledge, skills and understanding that they need to succeed at the highest levels. Very occasionally, pupils' concentration wavers and they chat to their neighbour rather than do their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are immensely proud of their school and of the opportunities it provides for them. They wear their uniforms smartly and look after the fabric of the school very well.
- Pupils speak with great enthusiasm and maturity about their learning. They have high aspirations and clear plans for further study and eventual employment.
- Pupils relish the extensive extra-curricular activities on offer. They seize opportunities to develop their interests and aptitudes in a range of sporting and cultural areas. Participation in extra-curricular activity, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, is high. Many pupils achieve significant success in local, regional and national competitions and events in their chosen activities.
- Pupils are keen to make a difference to the world around them. They learn to become active and responsible citizens by taking part willingly in a wide range of charity and volunteering events in their local community and overseas.
- Pupils demonstrate a deep appreciation of issues concerning equality and diversity. There is a tangible culture of respect, tolerance and understanding in the school. They talk thoughtfully and with insight about topical issues in the wider society in which they live.
- Leaders make sure that pupils are safe and that they know how to stay safe. Pupils are alert to a wide range of potential risks to their safety. They know how to protect themselves when online and understand about the dangers of radicalisation. Leaders also make effective provision for pupils' emotional and mental health needs. Pupils know there is someone that they can talk to if they have any worries or if they are concerned about a friend.

Behaviour

- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding.
- Pupils conduct themselves in an exemplary manner in lessons, in corridors and around the school. They are thoughtful towards each other, respectful of their teachers and unfailingly polite to visitors. Pupils mix together harmoniously at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Fixed-term and repeat exclusions are well below the national average and continue to fall. Leaders take effective action to support the very small number of pupils whose behaviour falls short of the high standards seen across the school.
- There is a studious and scholarly atmosphere in most classrooms. Pupils give their full attention to their work, contributing thoughtfully to class discussions, or working with sustained concentration, as required by their teachers. Pupils are punctual to lessons, invariably have the correct equipment with them and waste no time in getting down to learning.
- Pupils have been taught about all forms of bullying, including online, homophobic and racist bullying. They firmly reject all forms of discrimination. Any rare incidents of

bullying that take place are dealt with effectively by leaders. Leaders' own records suggest that bullying is not commonplace.

- Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire expressed strong confidence in how the school deals with behaviour and bullying.
- Pupils love coming to school and are rarely absent. Rates of attendance are consistently above the national average for secondary schools. Leaders monitor attendance carefully and take prompt action if a pupil's absence rises. Leaders rightly pay particular attention to removing any barriers to regular attendance that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND may have.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 4 is typically well-above-average in English, mathematics and a range of subjects. However, the progress pupils make from their starting points has been average, or, in the case of 2017, below average, for the last three years. While pupils with average prior attainment typically make strong progress, not enough pupils who reached the highest scores in their key stage 2 tests achieve equally high outcomes at GCSE. Pupils' overall progress in 2018 was better than in previous years, and was average overall.
- Published results show that there is some variation in how well pupils perform in different subjects. For example, in 2018, pupils' progress was above average in humanities, average in English, mathematics and science and below average in languages.
- Current pupils' progress suggests that the improvements in outcomes seen in 2018 compared to 2017 are continuing. The school's own assessment information indicates that more pupils in the current Year 11 are on track to meet their challenging targets than was the case last year.
- Pupils in other year groups are doing well in a range of subjects. This is because teachers are making sharper use of assessment information to provide pupils with the levels of challenge they need to make more rapid progress in their learning. For example, in mathematics, teachers ensure that pupils have fully understood a topic before moving on. Teachers have become more skilled in spotting pupils' misconceptions and addressing them promptly.
- In science, psychology and drama, current pupils benefit from their teachers' insistence on the correct use of technical terms. As a result, pupils have a more secure understanding of the concepts that underpin those terms.
- Teachers are keenly aware of the need for a greater proportion of high prior-attaining pupils to attain the highest grades. Consequently, teachers have increased the levels of challenge provided to these pupils. Pupils are responding well to the additional challenge they receive.
- Current pupils are now making stronger progress in languages than hitherto, particularly in Spanish. This is because appropriate adjustments to the curriculum have enabled pupils to develop more accurate speaking, listening, writing and reading skills.
- Careful use of additional funding means that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND receive effective support to remove any barriers to their learning. As a result,

these pupils are making similar rates of progress to other pupils in the school.

- Pupils read fluently and are skilled in making accurate inferences from books and passages they read in subjects such as history and English. However, the school library, though it is enthusiastically managed by pupil librarians, is disappointing. It is not a welcoming space and the range of books available is not wide enough to meet the needs of all pupils in the school. Leaders are well aware of this and are taking steps to improve the provision for reading and research in the school.
- Pupils are very well prepared for their next steps. They benefit from precise and timely careers advice. The outcomes they achieve enable them to move on to appropriate next steps, either in the school's sixth form, or with one of the other local providers of academic and vocational level 3 courses.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- Published outcomes for 2018 show that students made substantial and sustained progress from their starting points overall and in most subjects.
- The 16 to 19 study programmes offered by the school meet all statutory requirements.
- Students are very well prepared for the next steps in their lives and education. Most students go on to university. In 2018, one half of sixth formers gained places at one of the country's leading universities. Students who choose not to apply to university are very well supported in finding appropriate further education courses, apprenticeships or employment. Leaders have forged strong relationships with local business partners and were instrumental in working with local members of parliament to establish a careers fair for sixth formers in the area.
- Teaching in the sixth form is highly effective and is often inspirational. Teachers are passionate about their subjects. For example, a Spanish lesson was conducted almost entirely in the target language. In sociology, students were given the skills they needed to make sense of a range of complex statistical data. In sciences and mathematics, students were very well supported in tackling new and difficult material, which they did with determination and resilience.
- Teachers are skilled in combining exceptionally high levels of challenge with opportunities for students to ask questions and address misconceptions in a supportive environment. Teachers give students incisive and well-targeted feedback on their work. Students value this feedback and are meticulous in putting their teachers' advice into practice.
- Students speak extremely highly of the provision in place for them. They say that the advice and guidance they received before joining the sixth form was timely and impartial. Similarly, they have high praise for the ongoing support they receive from their teachers, for both their academic progress and for their emotional well-being.
- Students are outstanding role models for other pupils in the school. They seize opportunities to develop their leadership skills. They are highly visible around the school, for example as subject prefects, where they act as mentors to younger pupils. Sixth-form students also organise a number of trips and visits for pupils. They also put on a well-received and eagerly anticipated annual production.
- Leaders make sure that students are well prepared for life in modern Britain and for

their next steps. For example, students benefit from a programme of short lectures on issues of topical or academic interest to stimulate debate. Leaders also ensure that students know how to keep themselves safe and healthy, for example with input on driving, sexual and emotional health, substance abuse and online safety.

- Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in the sixth form. They are proud of the recent improvements in outcomes, particularly for high prior attainers. However, they are ambitious for even greater success. Leaders have rightly targeted as a next step further improving outcomes for girls who join the school at the start of Year 12.

School details

Unique reference number	136727
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10093470

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1076
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	292
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Mrs Julie Murton
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Moody
Telephone number	01622 726 683
Website	www.opgs.org
Email address	office@opgs.org
Date of previous inspection	1 to 2 December 2011

Information about this school

- Oakwood Park Grammar School is a slightly larger-than-average selective school that admits boys in Years 7 to 11 and both boys and girls in the sixth form.
- The school converted to academy status as a single academy trust in February 2012.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is lower than that found nationally.
- No pupils attend alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 54 lessons across a range of subjects and year groups. Some of these lessons were observed jointly with school leaders.
- The lead inspector attended one assembly, while other members of the inspection team observed pupils' learning during their tutor period.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders to talk to them about the impact of their work in the areas for which they are responsible.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Meetings were held with a group of staff as well as with groups of subject and year leaders.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, around the school and during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and around the school. They also met formally with groups of pupils.
- Pupils' progress over time was reviewed by examining a sample of their workbooks.
- Inspectors took account of 162 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent survey.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including records relating to pupils' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour. Information on governance, including minutes of governors' meetings, was examined. The school's self-evaluation summary and improvement plans were scrutinised, along with records of the school's systems for keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

Gary Holden, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lucy English	Her Majesty's Inspector
Frederick Valletta	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Powell	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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