

Inspection of a good school: Oakwood Park Grammar School

Oakwood Park, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8AH

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 May 2024

Outcome

Oakwood Park Grammar School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Kevin Moody. This school is part of Oakwood Park Grammar School trust, a single academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Shireen Razey.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils here develop an assured and positive sense of their own identity. They share a commitment to their school community, which they are proud to represent. This is strengthened by the leadership opportunities that give pupils a clear voice within the school. For example, sixth-form students enjoy a wide-ranging lecture programme. This enhances the confidence of those students who present and the knowledge of those in the audience.

The school is aspirational for its pupils, and they achieve very highly in almost all subject areas. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported to achieve strongly too. Pupils understand the values that underpin the school's 'behaviour curriculum'. They are courteous and respectful, and their conduct in class supports a positive learning atmosphere. If pupils have concerns, they know that staff will listen to them and take effective action when necessary.

The programme of enrichment days, clubs, trips and speakers broadens and extends pupils' learning. As a result, pupils gain experiences and encounter perspectives that challenge them to think in new ways. The school makes sure that all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, benefit from these wider opportunities in full.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school's curriculum gives pupils a broad and deep grounding across an ambitious range of subjects. Learning is sequenced carefully to build pupils' understanding. For

example, in science, learning about states of matter leads in to more complex ideas such as crystal formation. Teachers seek out opportunities for their pupils to go beyond exam specifications. Alongside this, the school's reading programme is designed to extend pupils' exposure to different cultures. It also helps pupils to develop an enthusiasm for reading and to strengthen their vocabulary.

Teachers are highly knowledgeable about their subjects and courses. They make sure that pupils revisit important concepts multiple times but with increasing complexity. This helps to cement pupils' understanding. By looking at worked examples, pupils develop increasing accuracy in their work. For instance, in history, teachers provide models that help pupils to develop their historical writing. Most of the tasks that teachers set help pupils embed or apply what they have learned. Sometimes, the work that teachers provide does not fully match the ambitions of the curriculum. When this happens, pupils' knowledge and skills are not developed as far as they could be. The school's approach to assessment helps teachers and pupils to focus on improving learning. Termly 'dashboards' help staff to identify concepts or topics that need further attention. Leaders also use this information to identify and support the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers use questioning skilfully to develop understanding. Where this is most strongly established, every pupil is both enabled and required to think deeply. Sometimes, teachers' checks for understanding in class are not as systematic. In these instances, some gaps in pupils' knowledge are not closed as swiftly as possible.

In almost all subjects, published GCSE data reflects pupils' strong achievement. Some published outcomes last year were not as high as the school has achieved in the past. Leaders are alert to these issues, which correspond with some of the variations in the quality of teaching. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils, including those with SEND, is very high.

The school's strategy to improve attendance has been highly effective. Staff analyse patterns of absence and work closely with pupils and parents to overcome barriers. This work has delivered sustained improvements, especially for previous persistent absentees. The school sets clear expectations for pupils' behaviour. Sixth-form students act as role models within the school. The vast majority of pupils are committed to their learning and strive to do their best in every lesson.

Pupils benefit from extensive learning beyond their academic studies. For example, they explore ethical issues and current affairs through form time discussions. This provision is planned and structured with meticulous attention to detail. Careers information helps pupils to feel well informed about future choices. The school uses parental, alumni and local networks to help pupils learn more about the world of work. Students in the sixth form are supported to go on to a range of prestigious courses and destinations.

Leaders and governors do all they can to make sure that staff workload is kept manageable. Staff speak about feeling 'empowered' by the support and training they receive. This helps to strengthen the sense of community within the school, where staff work collaboratively in support of pupils' success.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, tasks and teaching choices vary in how well they enable pupils to fulfil the aims of the curriculum. When this happens, pupils do not fully develop the skills and knowledge which leaders intend. Leaders must make sure that the activities and tasks chosen for pupils are directly aligned with the high ambitions espoused through the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2019.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years,

looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136727
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10321940
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,066
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	277
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Shireen Razey
Headteacher	Kevin Moody
Website	www.opgs.org
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 February 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Oakwood Park Grammar School is the only academy in the Oakwood Park Grammar School trust.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have

taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with school leaders, including the headteacher and deputy headteachers. The inspectors also met representatives from the governing board.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also discussed the curriculum and provision for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, governors, staff, parents and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts the pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Daniel Botting, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nicky Archer

Ofsted Inspector

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