

Inspection of Dane Court Grammar School

Broadstairs Road, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 2RT

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

This school was last inspected 15 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have made it their priority to provide a broad and ambitious curriculum for all pupils, regardless of their starting points. Pupils respond positively to the high expectations that staff have. They know that staff want the best for them, and they value the support their teachers provide.

Pupils describe their school community as open and inclusive. They enjoy a range of subjects and in many cases, confidently discuss their learning. Skilled teachers support pupils to meet broad and ambitious aims that extend beyond the academic curriculum. Pupils benefit from a range of clubs and extra-curricular activities on offer. As a result, many pupils have experiences of leadership, sporting success and achievement in the arts.

Pupils behave well in lessons and during social times. They feel safe and are proud members of the school. Most pupils feel that bullying is dealt with effectively. However, a small number of pupils are not as confident.

Parents are positive about the work of staff at the school. One parent said, 'My child has really thrived in this school in all areas of his life'. Parents recognise the actions that leaders are taking to promote high aspirations throughout the school. Of the pupils who stay at the school for sixth form, most excel.

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

The headteacher, trust leaders and governors demonstrate a strong commitment to improving the life chances of all pupils at the school. Leaders have high expectations of all pupils to work hard and try their best. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are provided with the support they need to achieve well. Leaders have also prioritised disadvantaged pupils' access to high-quality education and wider opportunities within school.

Teachers, including those who teach in the sixth form, have excellent subject knowledge. Recent staff training has focused on improving teaching approaches within lessons and this has helped to improve the consistency of teaching across the school.

Leaders have identified ambitious end points for curriculum subjects. However, in mathematics and physical education (PE), it is not yet clear how these have been broken down to clearly identify what pupils are expected to know and remember before they move on to the next steps of their learning journey. In other subjects, leaders are in the process of reviewing the content and sequence of teaching. For example, in history there are plans to reconsider topics from the national curriculum, that are not currently part of the school's history curriculum, to better prepare pupils for key stage 4 study.

At key stage 4, leaders' ambition that a higher proportion of pupils are entered for the English Baccalaureate is evident. In some subjects, including English, the curriculum plans go far beyond specific content that pupils will later be examined in. The texts pupils study are carefully selected to teach essential knowledge pupils need to be thoughtful and well-informed citizens.

Students in the sixth form are highly ambitious and are well supported by staff to achieve positive outcomes. There is a strong academic focus and breadth of ambition provided through the International Baccalaureate programme. High proportions of students leave the sixth form to study at a higher level.

Leaders have implemented detailed plans of what pupils will be taught in personal, social and health education (PSHE). They respond carefully to the context and what pupils demonstrate that they know and remember to ensure the programme of study meets pupils' needs. The school's values are also carefully woven through these plans. Most pupils feel well informed about careers and their next steps. However, some pupils would like more guidance relating to vocational routes and a broader range of careers. There is further training in place for staff teaching PSHE to ensure that all pupils feel well supported to engage in sensitive topics and remember what they have been taught.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils, including those in sixth form, know the school's values and rules and they respond well to the behaviour policy. There are positive relationships between peers and staff and learning is not disrupted by poor behaviour. Some pupils feel that incidents of bullying are not dealt with effectively in school. Where bullying incidents have been recorded, they have been responded to appropriately.

Leaders and those responsible for governance are reflective and use their links with other schools and networks effectively to raise standards for all. Staff feel that leaders consider their workload and well-being. They are confident that leaders will listen to any concerns that they might have.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a whole-school approach to safeguarding. The systems in place for keeping pupils safe are effective. Staff are kept up to date with regular and specific training. They are alert to possible risks pupils might face and are clear about the appropriate actions to take. More recently a small number of sixth-form students have been trained as mental health ambassadors to provide additional opportunities to support younger pupils.

Leaders follow up on any reported concerns swiftly and effectively. A very small number of written records require further clarity. Leaders work appropriately with external agencies in a timely manner to ensure pupils receive the help they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects what pupils need to know and remember has not been explicitly identified or sufficiently detailed. This means that some pupils are not achieving as well as they could because curriculum documentation is not clear enough about the key knowledge that pupils are expected to remember. Leaders need to ensure that each curriculum subject is planned and sequenced to include new knowledge and skills that clearly builds on what has been taught before and towards clearly defined end points.
- Some pupils in the school shared concerns about how bullying is dealt with. They are not all confident that staff respond effectively to their concerns. Leaders must evaluate the current approaches they use to communicate important messages to pupils to ensure all pupils that their concerns will be handled appropriately.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

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

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.

School details

Unique reference number	136585
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10199435
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,314
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	288
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Robin Curtis
Headteacher	Martin Jones
Website	www.danecourt.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Dane Court Grammar School converted to become an academy in February 2012. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2007 it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the baker clause, which requires leaders to ensure that pupils in Years 8 to 13 receive impartial advice about technical education, qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation including the school’s development plan and relevant school policies.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders and a range of subject leaders. Inspectors also met with governors, including the chair of governors and held meetings with representatives from the multi-academy trust, including the chief executive officer and the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors did deep dives in English, mathematics, science, PE, art and history. This involved inspectors talking to subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visiting lessons and looking at pupils’ work. Inspectors also looked at subject planning in PSHE, German, French and design and technology.
- Inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by looking at relevant documentation, staff recruitment checks and training records. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils.
- The inspectors took account of the views expressed by 77 staff and 204 pupils through survey responses. They also took account of 133 parents including 86 free-text comments through Ofsted’s online surveys.

Inspection team

Hanna Miller, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Cathy Reid	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Brinkley	Ofsted Inspector
Eliot Hodges	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Simmonds	Ofsted Inspector

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