

Grey Court School

Ham Street, Ham, Richmond, TW10 7HN

Inspection dates

14–15 March 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The school benefits from outstanding leadership at all levels that is determined to make sure that all students make the best progress they can.
- Leaders are passionate about their roles and are inspirational in their commitment to continue to improve all aspects of the school's work
- GCSE results have improved consistently and are well above average. This is largely due to a consistent focus on improving teaching and giving the students the confidence to achieve their full potential.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers plan interesting and enjoyable lessons that motivate and engage all students in their learning.
- Teachers know what their students are capable of and carefully adapt their teaching so that all of them make the best possible progress.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. They are clear that the school looks after them well and they feel very safe. This reflects the significant emphasis the school places on developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural life.
- Grey Court is a vibrant and thriving school that is growing rapidly and plays a significant role in the centre of the local community.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 39 lessons, including seven joint observations with senior staff. Inspectors, accompanied by two members of the senior leadership team, also carried out an analysis of students' work.
- Meetings were held with the senior leadership team, middle managers and other staff, as well as with a group of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and several members of other governors' committees. Inspectors met with a group of students from all year groups, and had informal discussions with students both during and outside lesson times.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings, development plans, current assessment information and the ways in which the school assesses how well it is doing. Inspectors took into account 156 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Christine Jones, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jenny Usher	Additional inspector
Linda Powell	Additional inspector
Kevin Morris	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Grey Court School converted to become an academy on 30 September 2012. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2010, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- Grey Court is an average-sized secondary school. There are considerably more boys than girls in the school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students entitled to free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and children from service families) is in line with that found nationally.
- More students than average are from minority ethnic groups and more speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is higher than that found nationally. The proportion of those supported through school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A few students attend local college courses for subjects not available in the school.
- The academy is above the current floor standards, the minimum standards set by the government for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Give students even better guidance on how to improve their work by making sure the advice teachers write in their 'next steps' comments is always focused tightly on how learning can be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students reach high standards in Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. The improving trend seen before the school became an academy continues. In 2012 over two thirds of students gained five GCSE grades A*–C including English and mathematics, and school assessment information indicates that this figure is set to improve considerably in 2013. During the inspection, high standards were seen in English and mathematics, as well as in many other subjects such as history and modern foreign languages.
- Students' progress is outstanding. This is because teachers maintain a close focus on the progress made by each and every one of their students and, where underachievement is identified, follow up with targeted support and resources for students who need it so they catch up quickly.
- Some more-able students are entered for mathematics GCSE early. These students benefit from this approach as they reach and some exceed their predicted GCSE grades and then go on to take additional courses in mathematics.
- Senior and middle leaders also keep a close watch on any variations in attainment and progress, and act promptly to address any issues. For example, the school plans well-judged extra support for students who are eligible for pupil premium funding. This support is effective in reducing the gap between these students' GCSE average points scores in English and mathematics and those of their peers as well as those of all pupils nationally. The gap is much smaller than that found in most schools and continues to close.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs also make outstanding progress, as do those from minority ethnic groups or those speaking English as an additional language. Teachers and support staff prepare work for them that is pitched at the right level and the extra help and guidance students receive make a big difference to them.
- All teachers are aware of the need to focus on students' reading, writing and speaking, and lessons are planned effectively to develop these skills. For example, during the inspection students were heard reading aloud with confidence and accuracy, as well as presenting their work to other students with considerable clarity and poise.
- Students are very familiar with debating and discussing controversial issues during lessons in many different subject areas and are confident in expressing their own ideas and opinions. The school regards its students as full members of the community, with associated rights as well as responsibilities. This makes a considerable contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The school's own records, supported by inspection evidence, indicate that most of the teaching is at least good and often outstanding. The teaching observed during the inspection was consistently effective in promoting students' interest and engagement with their learning through detailed planning that ensures lessons are designed to meet students' needs.
- Teachers have high expectations of all students. Challenging tasks are set and students respond well, making an excellent contribution to their own and others' learning, for example in a Year 10 science lesson where students were ably defending their allocated roles in a controversial discussion on cloning.
- The positive atmosphere in the school promotes a supportive and stimulating environment where students are keen and eager to learn. They work well in pairs, groups and independently, allowing the teacher to stand back and monitor while letting students get on by themselves and only intervening where necessary.
- In the rare lessons where teachers talk too much, students listen attentively and patiently and are ready participants in any subsequent activities. In all classrooms, constructive relationships support learning as students respect each other and the adults they work with.

- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and any other individuals who need extra help, receive high-quality support. Teachers and learning support assistants work together very effectively and have high expectations of these students so that they make at least good progress. This school never gives up on any student and no excuses for under-performance are ever accepted.
- Students' work is thoroughly marked, with mostly good-quality feedback given through the 'next steps' comments added by the teacher. These comments are sometimes too focused on tasks the student should do rather than on how learning could be improved. Students know their targets and are able to talk about aspects of their work in which they need to improve. They value the feedback from the 'next steps' comments.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' behaviour and attitudes towards their learning are exemplary. They attend school regularly, are on time to lessons and make an excellent contribution to the school community. During lessons they are not only eager to learn themselves but also to help others learn as well. In lessons observed, students were not just helping each other but also challenging their peers to explain their learning.
- The school is committed to a restorative justice approach to resolving conflict and improving students' behaviour and relationships. This is highly valued by the students, who feel the system is very fair and has really improved behaviour in the school. One outcome is that no student has been permanently excluded from this school, and temporary exclusions are rare.
- Through this approach the school makes sure that students have a very firm understanding of what constitutes bullying and the different kinds that can occur, such as homophobic or cyber bullying. Students insisted that bullying almost never occurs and that the consistent emphasis on the school's values by all adults in the school makes a significant difference to students' attitudes towards each other.
- The few students attending college courses enjoy the experience, and are well looked after and monitored by the school.
- Students are proud of their school. They make a full contribution to the school community and know their views and opinions are appreciated and always considered. For example, they were consulted about the move to academy status and were instrumental in the school retaining its original name.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides strong and determined leadership. She leads by example, both in the classroom as an outstanding teacher and in leading the school with a passion to make sure all students achieve their best. She has a high profile around the school and all know she will not accept anything less than their very best.
- The headteacher is supported by outstanding senior and middle management teams who share the drive for improvement and success that is illustrated by the increase in students' attainment and progress. Lessons are observed regularly to assess the quality of teaching and identify areas for improvement.
- Outcomes from these observations are an integral part of the very effective and well-developed systems for checking and evaluating the school's performance. These are very clearly linked to the targets set for teachers and to their pay and performance. The teachers are supported in reaching these targets by appropriately tailored professional development and training that encourage them to reflect on how they can improve. The impact of this focused approach to training is seen in the high quality of teaching and adult support.
- Any students at risk of underachieving or who are experiencing personal difficulties are given exceptionally well-planned support to meet their individual needs. The school has excellent links with the local authority and outside agencies and works well in partnership with them to give appropriate support to vulnerable students.
- The school is rigorous in promoting equal opportunities and creating an environment where no

form of discrimination is tolerated.

- The curriculum is very well designed to support students' improving achievement, and provision is personalised to the individual students. For example, information on students' performance and ability is used to create individualised option booklets for Year 9 students, giving choices appropriate to their needs. These booklets then form the basis for staff discussions over GCSE choices with the students and their parents or carers.
- A wide range of activities gives students plenty of opportunities to be involved in school life beyond the curriculum. Their participation is closely tracked to make sure everyone is taking full advantage of the opportunities on offer.
- Parents' responses to the 'Parent View' questionnaire are very positive and indicate they are very pleased with the school. Partnerships with parents and the local community are wide ranging and extensive. For example a local community trust has been formed to raise funds and develop a school farm and this is providing further enrichment opportunities for many students.
- Decisions about spending money are carefully focused on continuing to improve students' achievement. The use of pupil premium funding is closely monitored to ensure that it enables eligible students to reach the same high standards as their peers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are tightly organised and focused on raising achievement through a rigorous analysis of information on students' performance. They are supported by a very effective committee structure. Governors are fully involved in identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses and are able to provide a good balance between challenge and support. They have effectively supported the headteacher in driving improvement in all aspects of the school's work but especially teaching and behaviour management. Governors have a firm grasp of teaching and performance management arrangements, linking to teachers' pay and progression. They robustly monitor and evaluate expenditure to ensure that resources provide value for money. The governors have put secure systems in place for keeping students safe and ensure that these arrangements meet national requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
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

Unique reference number	138825
Local authority	Richmond upon Thames
Inspection number	409879

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,070
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Frank Kitson
Headteacher	Ms Maggie Bailey
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	020 8948 1173
Fax number	020 8332 2428
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