

Wilmington Grammar School For Girls

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137250
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	397464
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2012
Lead inspector	Jacqueline White HMI

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	778
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Connell
Headteacher	Maggie Bolton
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2009
School address	Wilmington Grange Wilmington Dartford DA2 7BB
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jacqueline White

Her Majesty's Inspector

Roger Garrett

Additional inspector

John Meinke

Additional inspector

Justina Ilochi

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 37 lessons with 35 teachers. They also held meetings with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's performance data and other documents, including the school improvement plan, safeguarding and equality policies, and the governing body minutes. Inspectors took account of any responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and analysed 556 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 100 completed by students and 55 from staff.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school and has specialist status in mathematics and computing. The great majority of its students come from the Dartford area and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is very low. The school converted to academy status in August 2011 and collaborates with the local boys' grammar school to offer sixth form provision. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is increasing and is above the national average at approximately 24%. English is an additional language for nearly half of these students. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average. The school is above the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school that is improving. Very positive relationships, mutual respect and a culture of openness underpin the harmonious and supportive community of the school in which most students thrive. It is not yet outstanding because there are still some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Most students enjoy learning and school life. They generally make good progress to attain high standards at the end of Year 11.
- The sixth form is good. There is some variability in students' performance across subjects but attainment is rising with an increasing number of students achieving higher grades at GCE AS and A level. Sixth form students are excellent ambassadors for the school.
- Teaching is good. The best lessons are very well paced, well planned and full of challenge. Students respond with excitement and enthusiasm to the variety of learning opportunities provided. However, in a minority of lessons, where teaching is satisfactory, some students are not sufficiently stretched. There is much good practice in marking, and some that is excellent, but there are also instances where marking fails to give students precise guidance about how to improve their subject-specific skills.
- The behaviour of students is good. Around the school it is impressive with students behaving courteously and considerately. In some lessons where students are not sufficiently challenged, their engagement falters, and occasionally, they are inattentive. Not all staff respond effectively to this.
- Leaders at all levels are involved in self-evaluation which is probing and accurate. Subject leaders are not equally expert at driving improvements in teaching but line-management is robust, and well-tailored training and interventions are building staff capacity and leadership skills. Comprehensive systems for tracking students' progress inform the management of teacher

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performance. The governing body is very effective in both supporting and challenging the school. Staff are proud to be part of the school and are bound together by a shared sense of purpose at the heart of which is the commitment to continuous improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding through coaching and systematically sharing the most effective practice. Give priority to:
 - using assessment information to plan lessons that challenge students appropriately and move them to the next level of learning when they become ready
 - sharing success criteria with students to demonstrate the highest levels of attainment
 - ensuring marking gives students precise guidance about how to improve their subject-specific skills
 - the consistent application of behaviour management strategies in lessons.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students join the school with above average attainment and most make good progress to attain highly at the end of Key Stage 4. This high attainment has been sustained over time. In the last three years, almost all Year 11 students have attained five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. There are no underperforming groups. Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive excellent support that ensures they also make good progress. Students' literacy skills are very well developed. In particular, speaking and listening are refined through a variety of well-organised discussion activities. In their response to the inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents and carers concurred that their children were making good progress.

Learning is well paced and good in the majority of lessons and outstanding in some, across key stages and in the sixth form. However, there are a few lessons where students are not sufficiently challenged to achieve their full potential. This is most evident in science where students make slower progress than they do in other subjects. Students learn best when clear success criteria demonstrating the highest levels of performance are shared in lessons. They relish opportunities to tackle difficult tasks and are inspired to aim high when excellence is modelled well by teachers.

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Quality of teaching

Questionnaire responses from parents and carers and students were very positive about the quality of teaching. The majority of teaching observed was at least good, some was outstanding and none was inadequate. Where teaching is very effective, students are fully engaged and respond with enthusiasm. These lessons are characterised by a lively pace, high expectations by teachers and an extensive variety of activities and opportunities to expand students' understanding and skills. Well-focused and discerning questioning enables students to develop thinking skills and elicits high quality and extended responses from them. Well-designed resources and effective use of technology support learning. Lessons where teaching was outstanding were denoted by exceptional orchestration of pace, learning objectives that were clearly linked to the highest National Curriculum levels and shared criteria that clarified precisely what students needed to do to succeed.

Most, but not all teachers use performance data well to ensure teaching matches the needs of all students. In some of the lessons where teaching is satisfactory, there is a lack of challenge and, often, too much teacher talk. These lessons fail to harness the full potential of the students and consequently progress is slower and opportunities to increase students' motivation and develop their ownership of learning are missed.

Students' work is marked regularly and well across many lessons. However, there remains variability in the quality of marking in some departments. Where marking was outstanding, there were sharply focused targets for improvement, very clear evaluation of work and explicit information about next step improvements. Excellent extra-curricular provision supports students' spiritual, moral and social development very well. In a few lessons, opportunities are missed to develop these aspects but, where they are actively encouraged to explore their views and give consideration to the views of others, students are highly reflective. The good curriculum is reviewed regularly and feedback from students is considered carefully. For example, the school is restructuring the integrated studies programme in Key Stage 3 so that students are clearer about its value and purpose.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students are welcoming, friendly and polite. They dress smartly and take genuine pride in being part of the school community. Their high attendance is testimony to the importance they attach to learning. Most say they feel safe at school and are confident that if any problems occur, including incidents of bullying, they will be dealt with effectively by staff. The school's records show that there are very few incidents of harassment of any kind, and, in discussions with inspectors, students corroborated this. Students have a clear understanding of the types of bullying that can occur, understand the nature of risk and act responsibly.

Relationships are warm and supportive. Students from all backgrounds get on well together. The carefully individualised care that is extended to students underpins the

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inclusive culture of the school and students' strong sense of belonging. The school has a clear discipline policy that is known to all but there is some inconsistency in its implementation. A few teachers are not quick and/or effective enough in tackling occasional inattentive behaviour in lessons. These behaviours generally arise when students are not being stretched to the limits of their potential. Usually, responsible behaviour is the norm. The great majority of parents', carers' and students' questionnaire responses were positive about behaviour and inspection evidence supports their views.

Leadership and management

The headteacher gives strong direction to the work of the school. Her approachable and open style is appreciated by students, staff and governors. She is well supported by the senior leadership team. Regular and comprehensive monitoring of teaching involves governors, senior and middle leaders. The good range of opportunities for professional development has contributed to improvements in teaching and leadership capacity. The sixth form is well managed. The school is outward looking. Collaboration with the local grammar school for boys is extending choice and opportunities for sixth formers.

The curriculum provides students with appropriate choices. The emphasis on the development of literacy, numeracy and communication skills is highly effective. Well-designed activities to build confidence, cultural understanding, community participation, and moral and spiritual maturity are integral to provision. Excellent enrichment activities have a positive impact on learning and student participation. The wholehearted commitment to students' personal development is a strength of the school.

Links with external agencies and providers augment the high quality of care, support and guidance for all students. There is effective promotion of equality of opportunity through pastoral programmes and many additional activities. The school carefully tracks the progress and behaviour of different groups and ensures that no groups underachieve. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated. Safeguarding procedures are robust. The governing body is well led and has developed confidence and expertise. Members have established a strong system of accountability for school performance across all aspects of provision. The cohesive way in which governors and senior leaders work together to prioritise the success of every student ensures good capacity for further improvement.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Wilmington Grammar School for Girls, Dartford DA2 7BB

Thank you for your very warm and friendly welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed our visit and commend you for your commitment to making the school such a harmonious place in which to learn. We would particularly like to thank the many of you who spoke with us so clearly and openly.

Our inspection found that yours is a good and improving school. The sixth form is also good. You are making good progress throughout your time at school and high attainment has been sustained at the end of Year 11. Attainment in the sixth form is rising, although there is some variation between subjects. You enjoy school life, including the excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities. This is evident in your high attendance. There is much good, and some outstanding, teaching in the school. In these lessons, you respond well to the teachers' high expectations. However, there is some satisfactory teaching, including in the sixth form, where you are not sufficiently stretched. Sometimes, you are inattentive in these lessons. Overall, your behaviour is good and relationships with teachers are warm and positive. You receive high quality care, guidance and support from teachers and support staff, and most of you feel very safe in school.

The leaders in your school worked with us to prioritise areas for improvement. Essentially, we have agreed that the most effective classroom practice needs to be systematically shared to improve teaching from good to outstanding.

All of you can help your school to improve further by maintaining a focus on the pursuit of excellence in learning so that you achieve your full potential in life.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White
Her Majesty's Inspector

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