

Tolworth Girls' School and Sixth Form

Fullers Way North, Surbiton, Surrey, KT6 7LQ

Inspection dates 26–27 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:		
		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement is good overall. Students make mostly good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in lessons. This, together with their exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and the extensive support the school provides, leads to attainment at GCSE that is significantly higher than the national average and which continues to rise.
- Key features of the good quality of teaching are high expectations and excellent subject knowledge. Teachers form positive working relationships with students and this helps to develop the learners' confidence.
- Skilled and highly consistent behaviour management by all staff makes a strong contribution to an exceptionally positive climate for learning and to students' outstanding behaviour and safety.
- Outstanding leadership and management are demonstrated by rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work by all leaders and managers, including those responsible for governance. The impact is seen in the continuing improvement in attainment and behaviour.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While by the end of the sixth form achievement is broadly in line with most other sixth forms nationally, progress at AS level is limited because students are not prepared exceptionally well for the demands of the course through developing independent learning skills and self-direction.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve in line with similar groups nationally, but they are not achieving as well as their peers in school.
- Not all teachers are assessing students' understanding regularly during lessons and adapting activities to meet the needs of all groups of students, including those with special educational needs.
- The recently introduced marking policy is not being implemented consistently by all teachers to inform students how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 43 lessons taught by 42 teachers, many of which were observed jointly with members of the school's senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors carried out additional shorter visits to several lessons, visited the academy's inclusion facility and listened to small groups of students reading.
- The inspection team held meetings with five groups of students, a small group of parents, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and an external consultant from the local authority. They met with school staff, including senior and middle leaders, and held a telephone conversation with the head of a pupil referral unit which is used by the school to support a small minority of students.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and examined a range of documents, including the school's monitoring of students' progress and the quality of teaching, the monitoring of students' behaviour and attendance, systems for the performance management and development of staff, school improvement planning and documents relating to the safeguarding of students.
- The inspection team took account of 118 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey and questionnaires completed by three members of staff.

Inspection team

Sue Frater, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Michael Elson

Additional inspector

Veronique Gerber

Additional inspector

Cliff Mainey

Additional inspector

Trevor Woods

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school converted to an academy in September 2011. The predecessor school, Tolworth Girls' School and Centre for Continuing Education, was last inspected in February 2007 when it was judged to be outstanding.
- It is a non-selective school situated within a local authority that retains selection on grounds of ability. The school is larger than most secondary schools.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average.
- The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than in most schools and a high proportion of the students speak English as an additional language.
- A much smaller proportion of students than is found nationally are eligible for support through the pupil premium.
- While the number of students identified for support at school action is well below average, the number identified for school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 follow part- or full-time courses at a local further education college and a few students across the school attend the pupil referral unit.
- Fewer students than usual join or leave the school at times other than at transition from primary school.
- The school currently meets the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers assess students' understanding, and adapt activities accordingly, during lessons in order to meet the needs of all groups of students, particularly disabled students and those with special educational needs
 - securing a consistent approach to informing students how to improve their work through written feedback
 - developing students' independent learning skills so that students are exceptionally well prepared for the sixth form and other stages of their education.
- Improve the achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs, and students in the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students' attainment is well above the national average. When the academy opened in 2011, a large majority of students obtained five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above including English and mathematics. The school's data for 2012 indicate that the average point score achieved by students in GCSE and equivalent courses continues to rise.
- Students enter the school with attainment that is broadly in line with national expectations. Due to consistently good and sometimes outstanding teaching, and the high level of support and intervention that the school provides, most students, including those with previously high levels of attainment, exceed typically expected rates of progress. Middle ability students achieve particularly well at GCSE, including in English and mathematics.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs do not progress as well as their peers because their needs are not met sufficiently in all lessons. The students who attend off-site alternative provision progress well.
- Overall, students who speak English as an additional language and those who are eligible for support through the pupil premium make good progress across the curriculum.
- The school's data indicate that progress across subjects is becoming much more consistent and evidence in lessons and students' work indicates that students achieve well. Achievement is particularly good in English, mathematics and the arts.
- Students read widely and often, particularly in subjects such as English, the arts and humanities. Most students in Year 8 have achieved the National Literacy Trust bronze award as 'reading champions' for inspiring others to enjoy reading; some Year 9 students are working towards the gold award.
- Students say they particularly enjoy subjects such as science and drama which engage them in investigating in groups, and evaluating and improving their own performance. They develop well-honed skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics across the curriculum. However, they are not developing independence and self-direction in their learning to ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment.
- In the sixth form, progress is limited at AS level because students are not prepared exceptionally well across the school to take responsibility for their own learning, for example by developing skills in investigating, analysing, evaluating, questioning, discussing and showing initiative. They catch up at A level and reach standards of attainment that are broadly in line with the national average.
- The great majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View feel that their children make good progress and a few parents and carers feel that progress could be improved further. Inspectors found that the school is successfully raising achievement for most pupils, across most year groups and subjects, although there remains some variance.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching in most subjects is usually good, with examples of some outstanding teaching. As a result, most individuals and groups of students, including those for whom the pupil premium provides support, make at least good progress and achieve well in Years 7 to 11.
- Teachers have high expectations and set work at a challenging level. Lesson planning typically provides a range of suitable resources and a clear sequence of activities that are followed up with appropriate homework. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge, together with probing questions, engages students and deepens their knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Across the arts, students are encouraged to reflect on their experiences. They investigate moral dilemmas in citizenship and humanities, and support each other very well in lessons. They

extend their cultural understanding through many visits and trips abroad and celebrate cultural diversity through music and events promoted by teachers of modern foreign languages.

- Literacy and numeracy are taught effectively across the curriculum. However, insufficient attention is given to developing students' independent learning skills across subjects, and this limiting progress in the sixth form at AS level.
- While teachers are beginning to use the recently introduced system for monitoring students' progress towards challenging targets, not all teachers are using the targets to inform the match of learning activities to the varying needs of the students. This, together with limited direction for teaching assistants in many lessons, results in disabled students and those with special educational needs not progressing as well as their peers. In addition, teachers are not consistently assessing the progress of all students during the lesson in order to reshape the tasks and accelerate learning further.
- Where assessment is used skilfully and independent learning skills are developed effectively, the learning of all students accelerates significantly. For example, in an AS drama lesson the students, including those with special educational needs, contributed suggestions about staging that were informed by independent research. They supported each other through exploring and evaluating their use of movement and words. The teacher and teaching assistant observed and assessed the learning and intervened only to ask probing questions when necessary to deepen students' thinking. Attainment in drama is high both at GCSE and A level.
- Teachers assess students' work accurately and ensure students know how well they have done, but the quality of written feedback is variable and students are not always informed about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Most parents and carers who responded to Parent View agree that their children are well taught.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' attitudes to learning are exemplary and make a strong contribution to their good achievement. Levels of attendance and punctuality are high.
- High expectations and the highly consistent implementation of a new behaviour policy and procedures by all staff make a strong contribution to an exceptionally positive climate for learning. Due to effective monitoring of behaviour and highly effective interventions, for example from student support workers, there are excellent improvements in behaviour over time for individuals and groups with particular behaviour needs.
- Students say that they behave well in lessons because of the mutual respect they share with teachers. They support their peers maturely in lessons and around the school site. Behaviour outside lessons is almost always impeccable. Students from all backgrounds are exceptionally considerate of each other and get on noticeably well together.
- Students are fully aware of the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying and prejudice-based bullying, and actively try to prevent it from occurring. Bullying in all its forms is rare and addressed highly effectively.
- All groups of students feel safe at school and at alternative provision placements at all times. Attendance and safety at alternative provision are monitored by named staff. Students understand very clearly what constitutes unsafe situations. They are able to manage risk sensibly and are highly aware of how to keep themselves and others safe, including in relation to e-safety.
- Staff and students state that behaviour has improved over time. Together with parents and carers, they are unreservedly positive about the behaviour and safety of students.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, ably supported by the recently restructured team of senior and middle leaders, has successfully established a culture of high expectations and prioritised the pursuit of excellence across all aspects of the school's work through the implementation of well-focused improvement plans. Students, parents and carers, and staff are committed to this ambitious vision.
 - The improvement plans are informed by robust self-evaluation. This includes the rigorous implementation of new systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and the progress of individuals and groups of students, which is shared with the governing body.
 - Effective performance management and professional development ensure that teaching is consistently good and improving, and takes account of the Teachers' Standards. In addition, performance management is used suitably to support decisions about pay progression.
 - The curriculum is reviewed regularly. It meets the needs of most students and promotes their achievement, personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. It prepares students effectively for life in modern democratic Britain and a global society. Excellent policies ensure that students have high levels of literacy. The school has identified the need to review its curriculum offer for students in the sixth form to better meet their needs, interests and aspirations and in light of the raising of the participation age.
 - The development of leadership and management at all levels has strengthened the school's capacity for further improvement. This is evident in the improvements in the progress of most groups of students, the improving trend in attainment at GCSE and in the improvement of the behaviour and safety of students.
 - The school has highly successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers to the benefit of students, including those who find working with the school difficult. These include support projects for parents of students who speak English as an additional language. Responses to Parent View indicate overwhelming confidence in the leadership and management of the school.
 - The school has continued to buy into the local authority's support services. The impact of the local authority's support has been very effective, especially in helping to develop the skills of middle leaders.
 - Staff model professional standards in all of their work and demonstrate high levels of respect and courtesy for students and others.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - is highly effective because it has a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and holds senior leaders robustly to account for all aspects of the school's performance
 - manages performance rigorously, particularly that of the headteacher, to improve teaching, leadership and management
 - fulfils all statutory requirements, including ensuring that the school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements
 - ensures financial stability through the effective and efficient management of resources, for example the pupil premium funding. Actions such as the recent restructure and strengthening of the school's leadership and management have led to the excellent deployment of staff and resources in order to promote equality for all groups of students.
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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 pupil's 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 pupil's 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	137060
Local authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	395674

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,350
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire Barker
Headteacher	Siobhan Lowe
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 February 2007
Telephone number	02083973854
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