

Wallington County Grammar School

Croydon Road, Wallington, Surrey, SM6 7PH

Inspection dates 14–15 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
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.

- Supported by the headteacher's cheerful determination that all will achieve highly and develop into civilised and successful young adults, senior leaders are driving improvement in teaching and learning with energy and skill. A student justifiably summed up the academy's strengths as 'quality and good relationships'.
- The sixth form is good. It offers a broad, well-taught, academic curriculum and fosters achievement, independence, leadership and enterprise. Girls settle in confidently and achieve highly.
- Governors are well-informed, carefully review the performance of leaders and teachers and intervene if challenging targets are not met.
- All groups make excellent progress, attaining very high standards, with particular strengths in English.
- Teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and responsive to challenging targets and to opportunities to extend their skills.
- Students are able and ambitious. They are responsible and courteous, accepting individual differences as a matter of course. All feel safe.
- The spread of subjects and the variety in the ways subjects are taught offer exceptional scope for students to develop interests and skills, and successfully promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all marking combines praise with detailed guidance on how to improve.
- Teachers do not always ensure that students learn from each other effectively during lessons.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 lessons, looked at students’ books in each key stage, and discussed students’ work with them.
- They met with leaders of core subjects to review how departments were responding to the needs of all students and supporting achievement.
- Inspectors reviewed, with senior leaders, the setting of targets for teachers, the monitoring of teachers’ effectiveness in improving students’ attainment and progress in each subject, and the management of teachers’ continuing professional development.
- They met with senior leaders responsible for pastoral care and for safeguarding procedures, including attendance.
- They had discussions with teachers and with groups of students.
- They reviewed a range of documents, including key policies and information about courses.
- They met with the Chairman of the Governing Body, two parent governors and a community governor.
- They took into account 155 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Patricia Metham	Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Janet Pearce		Her Majesty’s Inspector
Haydn Evans		Additional Inspector
Jalil Shaikh		Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Wallington County Grammar School converted to academy status in June 2011.
- It is an academically selective academy, of average size. It caters for boys in Years 7 to 11 and is coeducational in the sixth form.
- In 2011 the academy became a Leading Edge Partnership School, working with other schools to raise achievement. It is also a member of the Challenge Partnership programme and of PiXL 6, which is a collaboration of school leaders with a focus on the sixth form.
- The academy belongs to the Sutton Partnership of Secondary Schools.
- Although leaders and teachers share good practice between the partnership schools, provision for the academy's students is concentrated on-site and does not include alternative provision.
- It has two specialisms: science and applied learning.
- The school exceeds current government floor standards, which set the minimum standards for attainment and progress.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for Pupil Premium, which provides additional funding for students in local care and students known to be eligible for free school meals, is very small, as are the proportions of disabled students and students with special educational needs.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is high, as is the proportion of students whose first language is not English. Few, however, are in the early stages of English acquisition.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend and reinforce the excellent practice established in many departments, by ensuring that all teachers consistently:
 - when marking work, balance encouragement with specific advice on how to improve, and comment on the quality of students' imagination, critical thinking and argument as well as on literacy skills such as spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - take full advantage of students' responses in lessons to extend and deepen the knowledge and understanding of the group as a whole.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students enter with higher than average attainment. They achieve consistently better than average results, gaining many more than five GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics. This represents excellent progress as well as outstanding attainment. In 2011, results placed the academy in the top 1% of schools for English and science.
- Those eligible for the pupil premium progress as well as others in the academy and achieve more highly than, on average, students do nationally. In 2011 and 2012 all gained many more than five A* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics. There is clear evidence that they have benefited from additional one-to-one tuition and additional small-group teaching in English, mathematics and science.
- Similarly the small proportion of disabled students, students with special educational needs and the few at early stages of English language acquisition achieve more highly than students nationally.
- Students have been entered early for GCSE mathematics, achieving much better than average results. Last year, the most able completed one English unit in Year 10 and 'banked' good marks for inclusion in their overall result at the end of Year 11. GCSE specifications for courses to be examined in 2014 require all units to be entered for assessment at the end of the course, so early entry for one or more units will no longer be an option.
- Students, particularly girls, enter the sixth form with high grades at GCSE or equivalent. They make excellent progress in most subjects in Year 12, reflected in far better than average AS results. Strong, high-entry subjects in 2012 were physics, history and English literature. At A level, too, the proportion gaining top grades is consistently well above average, with particular strengths in chemistry and physics – both linked to the academy's specialism.
- Sixth formers contribute enthusiastically and adeptly to younger students' studying of GCSE texts and their development of skills, rightly seeing this as a way to refine their own communication and analytical skills. A Year 13 student working with a Year 10 group on *Of Mice and Men* commented that, not only did he derive great satisfaction from sharing his enjoyment of the text, he was also able to see how much his understanding and appreciation of literature had matured since his GCSE days.

The quality of teaching is good

- There is much outstanding teaching across departments, and the proportion has increased steadily over the past two years. Teaching is very seldom less than good. Conspicuous strengths of the teaching include: teachers' confident and enthusiastically shared subject knowledge; planning that is regularly updated to reflect students' pace and security of learning; teachers' productive questioning skills to check and extend students' understanding during lessons; encouragement for students to assess each other's work; a positive rapport with students; and well-managed use of modern and varied resources.
- These strengths were well demonstrated in a Year 8 history lesson, in which students' interest and wish to succeed were immediately excited by a quiz based on a film, *The Patriot*, watched in an earlier lesson. Taking on roles as key figures in the American War of Independence, students then explored decisions and events in a lively and thoughtful way. The activities were extremely productive because of the skill and knowledge embedded in the teacher's planning and management of the lesson.
- Students needing particular support are identified on lesson plans and practical strategies are outlined. These may include pairing of a high ability student with one encountering difficulties, or tasks designed to strengthen areas of weakness in ways that build confidence by allowing students to feel a sense of achievement.
- Teaching is less effective when teachers do not draw on the ideas and knowledge presented by

some students in discussion. Opportunities are then missed to sharpen the thinking, develop the analytical skills and challenge the preconceptions of the group as a whole.

- Although much marking is thorough and helpful, not all of it balances encouragement with specific guidance on how students can raise the level of their response and present their ideas more fluently and accurately.
- As students themselves are keen to point out, in the sixth form teachers place considerable responsibility on students to investigate topics and to present independent lines of thought and interpretation. For example, students vigorously presented contrasting views, organised as a formal debate, as to whether or not Achilles is presented as a tragic hero in the *Iliad*. They structured their arguments with great skill, using telling examples from the text. They challenged each other's interpretations with liveliness and confidence and put the debating topic into the wider context of classical Greek culture and philosophy. All this bore witness to the quality of the teaching that had motivated, informed and monitored their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students are emphatic that they feel safe and well-supported. They are extremely well-informed about the forms bullying can take, including cyber-bullying, and play a key role in creating a culture of mutual tolerance and respect. In every year, including Year 7, student volunteers are trained as anti-bullying ambassadors and cyber mentors.
- The concern reflected in a minority of the responses seen on Parent View about the effectiveness of the academy's handling of bullying was not matched by other inspection evidence. Behaviour observed in lessons and around the site was excellent.
- The recently reinvigorated House system is highly valued by staff and students, with good reason. It encourages leadership and team-building skills, builds positive links between year groups, promotes healthy competition that adds spice to students' wish to achieve, and extends students' learning and personal development beyond the curriculum. Inter-House competitions include sports, drama and debating.
- Attendance is already above average and still improving. It is supported by clear and brisk procedures to follow up absence promptly and to establish effective home–school links. Students and their families are proud to be part of the academy, so motivation to attend is strong.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Governors and senior leaders communicate a clear and ambitious vision that grows out of a very accurate and regularly updated understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for development. Their commitment to high achievement and all-round personal development is shared by leaders and managers at all levels, by staff, students, parents and carers. The headteacher speaks of fostering 'a life-long passion for learning'. This is well understood by students. Nods of agreement accompanied a Year 11 boy's comment: 'The school strives to enrich you, to help you mature.'
- Senior leaders closely monitor the achievement of individual students and groups, using it as the benchmark against which the quality and impact of teaching are judged. They have a very precise picture of strengths and areas for development and this sets priorities for whole-staff training and carefully targeted support for individuals. The proportion of outstanding teaching is increasing steadily. Where it is clear that aspects of subject leadership are not strong, senior leaders intervene to ensure that teaching and learning do not lose momentum and to provide appropriate professional development, combining support with challenging targets.
- The academy's largely academic curriculum is entirely appropriate. Students are confident that their choices are well-judged and well-supported. Virtually all students successfully cover the

subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. Sixth formers' progression onto competitive degree courses at prestigious universities indicates how well their subject choices equip them for the next stage in their education.

- Good use is made of the expertise and experience of other schools and of professionals working in areas including the arts and service industries; for example, in judging the effectiveness of staff, and in the deployment of modern technology.
- The range and quality of activities offered to students beyond their mainstream programme are exceptional. Options include: academic enrichment, such as philosophy and classics, mathematics, science and engineering; booster and revision sessions to reinforce mainstream subjects; activities to develop useful skills, such as debating; individual and team sports; and the arts. Students value these opportunities. As one observed: 'It's not only things that are enjoyable that people want to go to but sometimes those that stretch people who are doing well.'
- Students' genuine acceptance of different cultures, ambitions and personal choices reflects the academy's values. Governors, leaders and managers and staff present excellent role models. Policies promoting equality of esteem and setting out sanctions for any instances of negative discrimination are clear, consistently applied and regularly reviewed.
- Exploration of complex topics and texts, both in and beyond the classroom, and the development of personal and community responsibility – seen in action, for example, through the academy's House system and mentoring programmes – promote students' spiritual, cultural, social and moral development extremely effectively.
- Safeguarding procedures are thorough, including training for all staff in child protection issues.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is strongly led and represents a useful range of professional experience. Governors have given steady support to the newly shaped senior leadership team as Wallington has been establishing itself as an academy. Many governors are either former students or parents of students and know the academy well. They are clear about what should be preserved and what must change to meet new expectations and opportunities, summed up by the comment: 'Not a hot house – we want boys to enjoy their education.'
 - Governors routinely review reports on students' progress and on the quality of teaching. The relationship between teachers' salaries and students' achievement is closely scrutinised. When appropriate, governors call for further monitoring and intervention. Observation of lessons and discussion with senior leaders are key elements of governors' effectiveness as 'critical friends', providing challenge as well as support.
 - Although the number of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is small, governors closely scrutinise decisions about how the government funding is spent and how its impact is judged. To date, there has been persuasive evidence that the decisions have been sound and the impact on these students' progress clearly very positive, helping them to match the progress of their academy contemporaries and to outperform students nationally.

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	136798
Local authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	403683
Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	934
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	306
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Huitson
Headteacher	Mr Peter Smart
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	020 8647 2235
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