

West London Free School

Cambridge Grove, Hammersmith, London, W6 0LB

Inspection dates

3–4 July 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress in Years 7 and 8. This is because teaching is usually good and occasionally outstanding.
- Most pupils and their parents hold their school in high regard. Pupils particularly enjoy the wide range of sporting and musical opportunities that are open to them.
- Attainment in music and sport is significantly above average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well around the school. They are polite, courteous and considerate to visitors, staff and each other. They say bullying is very rare and should it occur is always very well dealt with by staff.
- The new headteacher and his recently formed senior team are providing good leadership. Leaders have worked closely with governors to establish a good school within two years of opening.
- Leaders and governors have worked together well to develop a curriculum that meets governors' aims of a classical liberal education. The curriculum is under constant review to ensure it meets the needs of all pupils.
- The headteacher and his senior leaders have introduced more rigorous scrutiny of the school's work and appraisal for staff. They have begun to improve further the quality of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, teachers do not use assessment information well enough to make sure work meets the needs of all pupils.
- Sometimes teachers do not mark books frequently enough. This means that advice that clearly identifies the next steps for pupils to take is not given and/or acted upon.
- Subject leaders have yet to put in place enough opportunities for pupils to investigate and find things out for themselves.
- Procedures for improving teaching are relatively new and carried out at a senior level. Subject leaders need further training to lead and develop teaching as the school and their departments grow.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of lessons taught by 15 of the 16 teachers employed by the school. Twelve observations were conducted jointly with members of the school's leadership team. A further five short visits to classrooms were conducted with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, school leaders, three members of the governing body, including the Chair, and two groups of pupils. Inspectors also spoke informally with pupils in lessons and at break times.
- Inspectors took account of 82 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire and two letters from parents.
- Inspectors reviewed the 11 staff questionnaires returned during the inspection.
- The inspection team observed the school's work, scrutinised information about pupils' achievement, checked work in pupils' books, examined records relating to behaviour and attendance, and looked at documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's work.

Inspection team

Peter Gale, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Daniel Burton

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- West London Free School is a small secondary school. It opened in September 2011 as one of the first free schools in the country. The school started with Year 7 pupils. Currently, the oldest pupils are in Year 8. The school will, in time, grow to the full secondary age-range, catering for pupils up to Year 13.
- The school is part of a multi-academy trust. The trust has permission to open two new primary schools in addition to West London Free School; one will open in September 2013 and one in September 2014.
- Pupils are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds with the largest group being White British. Approximately half of the pupils speak English as an additional language, although none at an early stage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through both school action and school action plus is slightly lower than in other schools.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and children of service families, is broadly at the national average.
- Some of the current Year 7 pupils are eligible for catch-up funding for pupils attaining below Level 4 in English or mathematics at the end of Year 6. However, the school is yet to receive this funding.
- There are no pupils attending off-site education with other providers.
- The headteacher was promoted to his post from deputy headteacher in January 2013. The senior leadership team has been fully in place since April 2013. The school is planning to move to new premises in the next academic year as it continues to grow.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress for all groups of pupils so it is consistently outstanding by:
 - ensuring teachers use pupil assessment information to plan activities that stretch, challenge and support pupils of all abilities
 - making sure all teachers mark books frequently and provide advice that clearly identifies the next steps to be taken, and ensuring pupils act on their advice
 - making sure that teaching engages all members of the class; for example, by giving pupils more opportunities to investigate and find things out for themselves.
- Ensure that training and development for subject leaders fully prepare them to lead and develop teaching and learning in their curriculum areas as the school grows.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils join the school with standards that are above average. All pupils are set very challenging targets. Pupils make good progress against their targets in Years 7 and 8 and their attainment, overall, remains above average.
- Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. Pupils have made more variable progress in some curriculum areas due to non-specialist teaching. Senior leaders have recognised this and, through a combination of better teaching and stretch-and-support sessions, pupils have largely caught up on any underachievement.
- More-able pupils and boys make slightly less progress than other pupils in the school. This is because teaching is not always closely matched to their needs. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are often highly motivated and, on average, make slightly more progress than other pupils.
- All underachievement at the school is now carefully identified and monitored. A range of new strategies and extra targeted teaching have been used to promote higher levels of progress. This has led to improved rates of progress for all groups of pupils across the school since January.
- Disabled pupils or those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers from their starting points. Most pupils identified at school action or school action plus are on track for their challenging targets.
- Pupils' attainment in the school's music specialism is high. Just under two thirds of pupils are studying an instrument. The school uses some pupil premium funding to subsidise instrumental lessons for eligible pupils; half of those supported by this funding are studying an instrument which is very high compared to other schools.
- Sporting achievement is strong. Pupils are well coached and regularly compete successfully against other schools, often against older pupils.
- The majority of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding make good progress in English and mathematics due to targeted support for all pupils in stretch-and-support lessons. Those pupils supported by pupil premium funding enter the school with attainment that is marginally lower than their peers. They make slightly more progress in English than their peers and slightly less in mathematics. Overall their attainment is a little lower than the other pupils.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is not in place. This school has not yet received any funding for this initiative and is investigating the reasons why with the Department for Education.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching in the school is good and some is outstanding.
- Teachers and pupils get on well together. Lessons are purposeful and fast paced. Pupils respond very well to opportunities to work together.
- In the few examples of outstanding teaching, extremely well-planned opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves resulted in rapid gains in their learning and high levels of enjoyment and engagement. For example, in an English lesson, taught by the director of studies, pupils relished the challenge of piecing together the meaning of a poem from different pieces of evidence. The competitive edge to the lesson meant that all pupils were motivated to do well and, by the end of the lesson, pupils' knowledge and understanding were greatly enhanced.
- Pupils benefit from bespoke teaching to meet their needs through the twice weekly stretch-and-challenge lessons. These are having a clear impact in raising the literacy and numeracy skills of lower-attaining pupils.
- The school is focused on improving literacy skills. All pupils read silently in registration twice a

week and frequently out loud during lessons. The school is aware that there is scope to monitor more closely the content and progress of pupils reading during registration. However, standards of literacy are high overall.

- In the large majority of lessons where teaching is good, pupils benefit from well-structured purposeful opportunities to work together; for example, by coaching each other to improve their batting techniques in cricket.
- In the small number of instances where teaching was less effective, learning was not challenging enough. While pupils are expected to complete a lot of activities, there was limited scope for pupils to speculate, hypothesise and draw their own conclusions. In these lessons, pupils become passive and make smaller gains in their learning because the fast pace means their responses are superficial and lack rigour.
- Not all teachers are equally effective at meeting the needs of all groups of learners. In a few of the lessons seen, all pupils were expected to complete the same activities at the same pace, regardless of their differing prior attainment. This resulted in lessons being too easy for some and too difficult for others. The use of teaching assistants to support learning is inconsistent and not all teachers plan well to make the most of the additional adult support available.
- There are many good examples of marking where pupils are required to respond to teachers' comments, by improving their work and correcting mistakes. In a few subjects, books are not marked often enough to have sufficient impact on pupils' achievement. This is because advice that clearly identifies the next steps to be taken is not given often enough and/or teachers do not ensure pupils act on advice given.
- Most teachers use good quality questions to check pupils' progress and understanding. Occasionally, questioning techniques are less successful in engaging the whole class.
- Music teaching is outstanding. In one lesson seen, the school's music scholars made fantastic progress because the teaching was challenging and ensured every pupil was fully involved. Highly effective teaching over time has ensured that these pupils have developed excellent sight-singing skills and impressive understanding of music theory.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are exceptionally polite and well mannered. They routinely hold open doors for adults and greet visitors to the school courteously and confidently. Pupils who spoke with inspectors were very keen to share their pride in the school. Pupils exemplify the school's values of courtesy, cooperation and common sense. They wear their uniform well and always look smart.
- Pupils are given and accept the many opportunities to take on responsibilities; for example, through the range of extensive house activities and drama productions.
- Pupils work very productively and thrive when given opportunities to collaborate and compete with each other in lessons and extra-curricular activities. They respond positively to well-planned opportunities to discuss their ideas and challenge each other's emerging views or understanding.
- Pupils say that they feel extremely safe in school. They appreciate the school's small size and the strong sense of community this brings. They feel well cared for by their teachers who they report are quick to respond to the very rare incidents of bullying when they occur. Pupils are tolerant of each other's differences and pupils from all backgrounds get along very well.
- Earlier in the year, a few pupils engaged in inappropriate text messaging. The school's robust approach to these incidents was combined with good quality training for pupils. As a result, pupils have a very good understanding of the risks associated with digital technology and how to stay safe online.
- Pupils' attendance is above average. They arrive punctually to school in the morning and lessons during the day. Very effective strategies to support a pupil whose attendance has previously been too low mean that no pupils are now persistently absent.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders, including governors, have a clear vision for the school's development. A new senior leadership team has reviewed processes and practice at the school since January 2013. The new headteacher is rapidly developing a clear sense of common purpose among staff and a range of strategies to best deliver the governors' long-term vision.
 - Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. The new director of studies is working effectively with teachers to improve their practice. Plans are in place to model and disseminate the very best practice more systematically than before.
 - Under the strong leadership of the senior master, pastoral and house systems work well. Pupils are proud of their school, enthusiastic about the house system, feel safe and behave very well.
 - Subject leaders have put their curriculum and teaching schemes in place effectively. Moderation with other schools has ensured that standards are comparable in Years 7 and 8 with other schools that perform well. Some subject leaders need training to effectively lead and develop teaching and learning as the school grows.
 - Performance management systems were not securely in place in the first year of the school's operation. The quality of teaching was not closely linked to progression through the pay scales. Systems are now far more rigorous in holding teachers and leaders to account. Support programmes are in place and wider professional training is closely matched to the needs of the school and individual staff.
 - Pupils enjoy the taught curriculum that includes Latin and divinity alongside most National Curriculum subjects. They are very enthusiastic about the extra-curricular opportunities open to them, especially those related to music and competitive sport which are partly delivered through after lessons every day. The school's production of 'Oliver', being rehearsed and performed during this inspection, is of a very high standard.
 - The school is effective in encouraging tolerance and understanding, and in eliminating all forms of discrimination. For example, the school's very inclusive and extensive approach to learning outside the classroom ensures that all pupils are able to access any of the wide range of trips and activities on offer, regardless of their financial circumstances.
 - The promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural values is outstanding. Lessons and other activities are planned to take account of these values and they are deeply embedded in the taught curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Pupils are given very good opportunities to develop cultural understanding through music.
 - Safeguarding measures are robust. The school site is very secure and governors have a very strong understanding of safeguarding and child protection.
 - Previous weaknesses in management which led to a few parents raising concerns about school leadership and organisation have been tackled; 90% of the high number of parents who completed the online survey Parent View indicated they would recommend the school to others.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors give generously of their time and under the strong leadership of the Chair of the Governing Body, they are helping and challenging senior leaders to drive up standards and deliver the vision for the school. Improved reporting to governors mean they are able to closely monitor the progress of different groups of pupils. Governors ensure that statutory and safeguarding requirements are met. They have carefully considered, with senior leaders, how to spend additional funding, such as the pupil premium money, to overcome barriers to learning and ensure disadvantaged pupils have the same opportunities as their peers. The governing body has been more closely involved in monitoring the performance of staff this year and has a good understanding of the quality of teaching because it receives regular reports from senior leaders on this and other matters.
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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 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	136750
Local authority	Hammersmith and Fulham
Inspection number	400319

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

Type of school	Academy free school
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Allanach
Headteacher	Sam Naismith
Date of previous school inspection	not previously inspected
Telephone number	020 8600 0670
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