

Swakeleys School for Girls

Clifton Gardens, Hillingdon, Uxbridge, UB10 0EJ

Inspection dates 6–7 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Achievement is outstanding. Almost all pupils make strong progress through both key stages. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is consistently higher than the national average.
- All groups of pupils, including those eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils, pupils with special educational needs, and those who need special help to catch up make at least good and often outstanding progress through the school.
- The popular mixed sixth form is outstanding. In almost all subjects pupils make excellent progress and achieve very good results. This is due to the excellent pastoral care and high-quality teaching they receive.
- Teaching is outstanding because in the great majority of lessons it is typically good and is often outstanding. Teachers set high expectations, match the work closely to pupils' needs and motivate them well.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Pupils say they feel safe and are happy at the school. They have extremely positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary.
- The headteacher and her deputies are passionate about providing the best possible education for all pupils. Together with the committed governors and willing staff they have brought about significant improvements in teaching that have resulted in great achievements by pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 lessons, of which two were joint observations with the headteacher and three each with the two deputy headteachers.
- The inspectors talked with pupils, looked at samples of their work, and listened to a group of Year 8 pupils read.
- Meetings were also held with teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher, the senior leadership team, and the school’s middle leaders. A meeting was held with the school’s improvement adviser to discuss the extent and impact of support provided to the school.
- The inspectors took account of the 191 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), two letters from parents and carers, and 88 questionnaires returned by school staff.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at many documents including the school’s website, minutes of governing body meetings, the school’s self-evaluation, the school’s development plan, performance management documentation, planning documents, monitoring and assessment information, school policies, and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

John Collins, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Raminder Arora	Additional Inspector
Kevin Morris	Additional Inspector
Andrew Lyons	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly larger than the average sized secondary school. It converted to academy status in September 2011. When its predecessor school, known as Swakeleys School, was inspected in October 2009, it was judged to be good.
- The school benefits from its own sixth form, which is open to both boys and girls from other schools.
- About half the pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above the national average but almost all have good command of the English language.
- Approximately one in six of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium; this is a threefold increase over previous years but remains below the national average. Pupil premium provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action and school action plus are higher than average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is also above average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has gained Investors in People, the Healthy Schools Award and the Princess Diana Award for work against bullying.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teachers' marking of pupils' written work by:
 - ensuring that all teachers mark regularly and accurately, and when appropriate, make sure that pupils' understand what they must do to improve through clear legible comments.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Most pupils enter the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment that are at national averages. Their attainment by the end of Year 11, in most subjects and including English and mathematics, is consistently above national averages and progress is high compared to national figures.
- Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding. AS-level, A-level and vocational subjects show above average achievement for most subjects and the percentage of students gaining A* to A and A* to B grades at A level are above national averages. Consequently, students are suitably prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment.
- School information and inspection evidence confirm that the current achievement of pupils in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium, has improved significantly over the past three years and is above that expected for their ages. In particular, the proportion obtaining the highest grades in GCSE has increased significantly and the proportion obtaining five A* to C grades including mathematics and English is well above the national average.
- The proportion obtaining the EBacc (GCSE qualifications in English, mathematics, science, a language and the humanities) is well above the national average and has improved year on year.
- Pupils that enter with below average reading scores benefit greatly from the 'Catch up' programme and some make exceptionally good progress. Reading and oracy programmes are used with all pupils and are having good impact on their reading and language development. As a result almost all pupils read widely for pleasure and are confident, fluent English speakers.
- The school ensures all pupils, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities for learning that are appropriate to their needs.
- The school has in the past entered its pupils early for GCSE examinations but, after much discussion, has opted not to do this in future.
- Pupils from all different ethnic backgrounds achieve at a similar outstanding level.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium are about one grade behind their classmates in both English and mathematics. However, their attainments are nevertheless well above local and national averages for eligible pupils. Their good progress has been recognised by a letter of commendation from the Minister of State for education.
- School records for pupils currently eligible for the pupil premium show that the gap in achievement between these and other pupils is closing in both English and mathematics. When comparing the progress from their starting points, there is no significant difference between those eligible for the pupil premium and their classmates. In 2013, eligible pupils achieved an average of about one third of a grade better at GCSE than other eligible pupils nationally. This is because of the high-quality support they receive from subject teachers and the various intervention programmes provided by the school.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good in almost all subjects, and is occasionally spectacular. This is partly because of the supportive way the school encourages its pupils to persevere and also because of the high-quality teaching and support they receive.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Overall, the quality of teaching is outstanding. In the great majority of lessons it is typically good and is often excellent.
- Teachers set high expectations for their pupils and pupils respond very well to the challenge. They have high aspirations and make good, and often better, progress as a result.
- In a Year 8 science lesson, pupils had learned about global warming. They were knowledgeable

and confident when responding to questions asking them why and where acid rain occurs, and about the effect it has on the natural and built environment. Their written work showed they take pride in their work and make excellent progress.

- In a Year 11 English lesson, pupils used poems by modern day poets to explore issues of race and identity. Skilful, probing questioning by the teacher revealed in-depth understanding of the issues and led to insightful, mature, written work of high quality.
- In all the lessons seen the climate for learning was at least good and good relationships between teachers and pupils, as well as among pupils, feature strongly.
- Teaching in mathematics and in English is at least good and often outstanding. Most teachers use pupil progress information and assessment effectively to track and monitor their progress and use this information to challenge all groups. Lessons are planned and structured to meet the needs of all pupils. This has had a clear impact on raising standards in both subjects.
- When assessing pupils' written work, a few teachers do not provide sufficient written information to enable pupils to understand what they have to do to improve and to move to the next level. However, the majority give high-quality advice and guidance.
- In the sixth form, teachers have high expectations of their students and this encourages them to achieve and progress well. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and lessons are carefully planned and structured to meet the needs of individual students. Much of the teaching is outstanding as a result.
- Teachers throughout the school support the development of pupils' literacy skills effectively in all subjects. Pupils who have difficulty in English and/or mathematics benefit from small-group work and one-to-one teaching to enable them to catch up rapidly with their classmates.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire said that teaching was good and were pleased with the quality of homework set.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils say they feel safe and are happy at the school.
- Almost all pupils have very positive attitudes to learning; this is a consequence of their strong relationship with teachers. They take part in learning activities enthusiastically, ask and answer questions confidently and competently, and they work well independently and with others.
- Pupils' high levels of motivation are coupled with good ability to concentrate and it is clear that they strive to do well. This is evident in the way they present their written work, which is mostly systematic and with care. They make effective use of teachers' comments for improvement.
- A consequence of pupils' eagerness to learn, and systematic monitoring by staff, is that their attendance is above the national average.
- Behaviour in lessons, around the school and in the playground is exemplary. During a rainy lunchtime, pupils chatted quietly and politely in the dining hall, corridors and classrooms. Almost all pupils are well mannered and courteous to each other and to adults. They show respect for each other's feelings, views, beliefs and property.
- The school does much to create a culture of caring and the pastoral care system provides outstanding support for all pupils.
- There are clear indications of the good impact of the school's values and caring ethos. For example, pupils regularly organise charity events and raise money to help others. They are especially supportive and caring of pupils who are disabled or less fortunate than themselves. In 2011, a group of girls taught in a school for underprivileged pupils in South Africa. It is activities such as this that earned the school the coveted International School Award.
- Pupils say they feel very safe and happy both in school, and when travelling to and from school. In meeting the requirements of the Princess Diana Award for work to prevent bullying, pupils say bullying rarely happens but if it does, and the teacher is told, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. They know that other pupils provide excellent support when they share any worries. They are very tolerant of the differences in others and know that if they are worried they can also talk with an adult in the school.
- Pupils have a good awareness of unsafe situations, including internet safety and road safety, and they know how to keep safe. Pupils throughout the school know the importance of exercise and are knowledgeable about healthy eating; their activities and standards in this regard led to the Healthy Schools Award.
- The very positive views of the majority of parents, carers and staff support the inspection findings about behaviour and safety.

The leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher is an outstanding leader. She is ably assisted by senior leaders who are themselves highly effective, skilled practitioners. All are passionate about improving the school and the achievements of its pupils. They have ensured that all staff, parents, carers and pupils have a clear understanding of the school's aims and their part in achieving the school's vision.
- There is a clear focus in the school on consultation and working as a team. This has secured high levels of commitment from the enthusiastic and highly competent staff and raises the aspirations of all in the school
- Leaders at all levels influence decision-making and take an active part in starting, prioritising and leading improvement activities. Middle leaders in particular are knowledgeable, incisive and committed to improvement in the areas they lead.
- The school's own checks on its strengths and weaknesses are accurate and its plans for improvement are correctly focused on improving teaching, attendance and pupils' achievement. Teaching and learning are extremely well managed and are outstanding as a result.
- The school has earned the Investors in People Award. This is largely because the headteacher and governing body have ensured that many teachers, middle leaders and other school staff have had relevant and appropriate training in areas that required improvement. This has been effective, for example, in producing improvements in pupils' attendance and in their progress in both English and mathematics.
- In the absence of local authority support, the school has received light touch support from its external improvement adviser.
- The school meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in offering the required wide range of well-planned learning activities, including sport, which motivates the pupils and helps them to develop well, academically and personally.
- Equality of opportunity and inclusion underpin the work and ethos of the school. There are wonderful examples of pupils who, with the encouragement and support of school staff, have overcome enormous difficulties and are flourishing as young adults. They serve as outstanding examples of the high quality of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils throughout the school.
- All staff and almost all parents and carers, using the online questionnaire, Parent View, say the school is well led and managed.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are well trained for their role. They have a good understanding of how well pupils are doing compared with national averages and make effective use of national information. They take part in checks of the school's performance, visit lessons and events, and monitor safeguarding and the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs on a frequent basis. They have very good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use this to hold the school to account. This enables them to take a major role in school improvement planning and in policy making. Their awareness of the need to improve progress for the pupils that are eligible for pupil premium funding, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs led to the allocation of funds to provide small-group and one-to-one tuition for those pupils. As a result, their progress is close to that of their peers. Governors are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching, and are very much involved in decisions about teachers' status and pay; they use safe recruitment procedures and do not permit unjustified promotion or salary increases. They ensure that all statutory requirements are met, and have good capacity to assist the school with further improvements.

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	136631
Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	422290
Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	1,011
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul McLauchlin
Headteacher	Sue Pryor
Date of previous school inspection	23 Sept 2009
Telephone number	01895 251962
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