

Wilmington Grammar School for Girls

Parsons Lane, Wilmington, Kent DA2 7BB

Inspection dates

3–4 November 2015

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding academy

- Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. Pupils make rapid progress in a range of subjects.
- The headteacher is a determined and capable leader who has set very high expectations for staff and pupils. Aided by a highly skilled leadership team, she has gained the overwhelming support of staff, pupils and parents.
- Leaders, managers and governors are highly ambitious for the academy. They work very effectively as a team to ensure that all pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve the high expectations set for them. As a result, standards continue to improve.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Teachers use their very strong subject knowledge to develop pupils' passion for learning.
- On a few occasions, the progress of the most-able pupils is slowed because they are not given challenging work quickly enough.
- Pupils feel safe and very well cared for by staff. The well-being of pupils is as important as their academic success.
- Governors are very effective. They know how well the academy is doing, but continue to challenge leaders to improve teaching and achievement further.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are exemplary. Pupils are well equipped to take their place in society. They respect each other and adults and enjoy being at the academy. They are very enthusiastic about their learning and this contributes significantly to their progress. Attendance is above average.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. Pupils appreciate and embrace difference. This means they are exceptionally supportive of others and very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The 16–19 study programmes are good. Leaders have taken effective action to improve pupils' achievement, but it is not consistently high across different subjects.
- Teachers provide high-quality feedback to pupils. Pupils use this very effectively to enhance their learning.

Full report

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the most-able pupils are always sufficiently challenged from the outset in lessons, so that they can reach their full potential.
- Raise achievement in 16–19 study programmes, by ensuring work is closely matched to pupils' needs, so that pupils make sustained and substantial progress from their starting points across all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The academy is extremely well led. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are a highly skilled, caring and committed team who have effectively focused on improving the already high standards in the academy. They are determined that pupils will achieve their potential as learners and develop into well-adjusted and responsible members of society. This is a sense of purpose that is shared by staff and pupils.
- The leadership of teaching is outstanding. Leaders, including the head of 16–19 study programmes, have a very accurate understanding of the academy's performance and have addressed effectively all the areas for improvement from the previous inspection.
- Leaders use information about pupils' progress and achievement thoroughly to monitor the work of the academy. This ensures that teaching is of a high standard and swift action is taken to tackle areas identified for development. Pay progression is clearly linked to improved teaching, leadership and achievement.
- Middle leaders work together as an effective team. They very closely monitor pupil progress and rapidly respond to any underachievement, to provide bespoke support to pupils.
- Leaders are very skilled at working with staff to improve their teaching. For example, small groups of staff are carefully put together to develop each other's practice and expertise. As a result, staff feel motivated and supported to improve, and feel their contribution to the academy is valued.
- The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils exceptionally well, ensuring their rapid progression and excellent preparation for their next phase of education or training. It is broad, balanced and well-structured to help pupils achieve their best. Pupils are encouraged to aim high because they are guided towards choosing the most demanding courses and qualifications. The curriculum makes very effective provision for the development of pupils' reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills.
- Pupils benefit from an impressive range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, for example a wide variety of sports, visits to other countries and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. As a result, there are many opportunities for pupils to pursue their interests and develop new ones, as well as experience cultures other than their own.
- The academy's spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is extremely strong. Consequently, pupils embrace, respect and celebrate difference. They are unaccepting of any form of intolerance or prejudice. The academy community is a highly harmonious and supportive one. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain and have a very secure understanding of British values and the contribution they can make to maintaining them.
- Parents are very positive about the academy. The very large majority of those that responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, felt the academy was well led and would recommend it to others. Staff views are overwhelmingly positive and they are proud to be members of the academy.
- The academy uses pupil premium funding exceptionally well. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make significantly better progress than other pupils nationally and often do better than their classmates.
- Leaders work effectively with the local authority's school improvement partner which has resulted in valuable school-to-school support.
- **The governance of the academy**
 - Governance of the academy is very strong. Governors bring a wide range of expertise and skills to their role and are well aware of the need to maintain their training, for example about child protection. They ensure the academy's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and are effective.

- Governors have a very secure understanding of performance information and use this effectively to provide a high level of challenge to senior leaders. Governors’ links to specific areas of the academy’s work mean they have a detailed knowledge of the quality of teaching, and know its strengths in general as well as the relative performance of staff in different subject areas. They know what is being done to improve teaching and reward it where it is good or outstanding. Governors effectively draw on and use the views of the academy’s community, for example through their attendance at parents’ evenings and consultation of pupils at pupil council meetings.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. They protect and ensure the safety of pupils and fully meet requirements. Leaders are acutely aware of specific dangers related to their pupils, for example female genital mutilation and anxiety. Academy records show that leaders are dogged in their pursuit of support from external agencies, such as social services and the police, if they feel a pupil is at risk. Leaders work closely with parents to ensure they understand relevant risks and how they can support their children, for example through the provision of information about online safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teachers have exceptionally strong subject knowledge. They use it very effectively to help pupils make rapid progress and to communicate a passion for learning. As a result, pupils demonstrate a thirst for knowledge.
- The strong support provided by teachers helps pupils become very confident learners who feel very secure in their teachers’ ability to teach them well. Consequently, standards are very high, in almost all subjects.
- Teachers give pupils detailed and frequent feedback about their work. This has a considerable impact on moving pupils’ learning forward. Pupils value this guidance and use it in highly effective ways, for example, to prepare for examinations, complete homework or to improve future work. Additionally, pupils confidently assess each other’s work and provide pertinent feedback.
- Teachers know pupils well; they have high expectations of them and what they can achieve. They skilfully question pupils to make them think deeply about what they are learning. For example, in a Year 10 religious studies lesson, the teacher carefully and persistently challenged pupils to explain the differences between absolute and evolving truths.
- Teachers monitor pupils’ progress and understanding during lessons very effectively, adapting tasks as appropriate and encouraging pupils to check their work themselves. On a few occasions, the progress of the most-able pupils slows because they are not always given the most challenging work quickly enough. Leaders are aware of this and it is an improvement priority for the academy.
- Teachers set meaningful and relevant homework regularly that supports learning very well; it reinforces what pupils already know, challenges them and helps them to reflect on their learning.
- Teaching in the 16–19 study programme is good. Pupils’ achievement is improving rapidly but is not consistently high across the range of subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The academy’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils display high levels of self-confidence. Expectations of pupils are high and pupils rise to these and take responsibility for their learning. They demonstrate a love of learning and a desire to do well and produce their best. Staff and pupils consistently demonstrate the importance they place on education.
- Leaders’ effective actions to develop pupils’ personal skills mean pupils feel comfortable to question, challenge and discuss ideas and issues. Unfailingly, they do this in a supportive way, showing respect for their differing backgrounds and experiences. The introduction of the ‘Wilmington mindset’ means pupils develop resilience to accept criticism and to use it positively to improve.
- Pupils play a full part in decision making, for example deciding what topics to cover in their ‘learning for life’ sessions. As a result, they have an excellent understanding of issues that may affect their age group and gender, for example eating disorders. The very strong relationships between pupils and staff mean pupils feel able to seek help if they have concerns about their physical or emotional well-being.
- Pupils say they feel safe and very well cared for by staff. Pupils are very confident they will be helped should they need to tell staff about a problem or worry.
- Systems for safeguarding and recruitment of staff are effective, prominent and up to date. Staff receive

regular training to further their understanding on safety, including about sensitive issues such as self-harming, and they know how to raise concerns should they need to.

- Pupils are very knowledgeable about the different forms of bullying, including racist, homophobic and cyber-bullying. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said bullying was extremely rare but when it does occur it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff. This is confirmed by the academy's own records.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are polite, welcoming and full of life. High levels of engagement and an enthusiasm to learn demonstrate the positive attitudes of pupils. As a result, learning is the focus and behaviour requires very little management by staff.
- Pupils, staff and parents have a very high opinion of behaviour and how positively this contributes to the ethos of the academy. Pupils conduct themselves exceptionally well in lessons and around the academy. Poor behaviour and exclusions are very rare.
- Attendance is above average and very few pupils are persistently absent from the academy. Disadvantaged pupils have levels of attendance that match those of their classmates.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Pupils achieve exceptionally well across a wide range of subjects. They make outstanding progress from their starting points, which are significantly above those typical for their age. Pupils leave Year 11 with standards of attainment that are consistently above average in almost all subjects. As a result, pupils are extremely well prepared for their next stage in education, training or employment.
- The proportions of pupils making expected progress and exceeding expected progress from their starting points are high compared to national figures in English and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils do especially well. The academy's supportive ethos, together with high expectations, means these pupils do much better than other pupils nationally and often do better than their classmates.
- Pupils who are disabled or with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language receive highly effective help and support. This means they make the same progress as their peers.
- Leaders have taken very effective action to ensure that, over time, pupils' progress and attainment have improved, particularly for more-able pupils. As a result, the proportion of A* or A grades achieved in GCSE examinations has risen steadily since the last inspection in the majority of subjects, to be well above national averages.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The quality of 16–19 study programmes is improving quickly. The appointment of the current headteacher has resulted in more productive joint working with leaders at Wilmington Grammar School for Boys and higher expectations of pupils. As a result, considerable and effective changes have been made to the curriculum and the way pupils' achievement is tracked and supported.
- As a result of good teaching, pupils' progress has improved over the last two years, particularly at AS level, and is now good. Pupils' current work shows increasingly rapid progress. Leaders are aware that, although pupils' progress is outstanding in some areas, it is not consistently good or better across the range of subjects. This is the reason why the effectiveness of 16–19 study programmes is not as exceptional as the rest of the academy.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge, but work is not always matched closely enough to pupils' needs. As a result, sometimes pupils do not make the progress they should.
- All pupils entering the 16–19 study programmes had achieved a grade C in English and mathematics.
- Leadership of the sixth form is very effective, and this is demonstrated by the improvements that have taken place. Leaders track pupils' progress very well and take swift action to tackle any emerging underperformance.
- Pupils benefit from high-quality impartial advice and guidance, which begins well before they join 16–19 study programmes. This helps them to choose qualifications which are best suited to their needs and means a much higher proportion of pupils are retained on study programmes than previously.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well. They show respect for each other and staff, and set an excellent example to younger pupils. Pupils speak very highly of their teachers, who they regard as very supportive.

- The proportion of pupils who go on to higher education, including 'Russell Group' universities, is high and increasing. Last year, there were no pupils who did not enter education, employment or training.
- Pupils make a significant contribution to the life of the academy and this enhances their personal development. They listen to younger pupils read and make a valuable contribution to charity campaigns and health and well-being initiatives. For example, a group of pupils recently produced a high-quality short film exploring the dangers of eating disorders and poor body image, which has been taken up by Kent County Council for wider distribution.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of work experience opportunities that are closely matched to their individual skills and career aspirations. As a result, pupils' employability skills are very well developed and pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

Academy details

Unique reference number	137250
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10001509

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the academy roll	871
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Connell
Headteacher	Donna Lodge
Telephone number	01322 226351
Website	www.gsgw.org.uk
Email address	enquiries@wgsg.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 May 2012

Information about this academy

- This academy is smaller than the average secondary school.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2014. Being relatively new to headship, she receives leadership support from the headteacher of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Faversham.
- The academy gives and receives school-to-school support through SSAT, the Leading Edge Partnership and the Dartford Area School Consortium.
- The headteacher provides leadership support to the Principal of the London Design and Engineering University Technical College.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the academy receives the pupil premium (additional funding for specific groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority) is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average. Approximately 15% of pupils are of African heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average.
- Since 2013, the academy has worked in collaboration with Wilmington Grammar School for Boys to provide co-educational 16–19 provision (WG6). To ensure a balance of ability and gender, half the boys are on roll at the girls' school and vice versa.

- The academy meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The academy does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons, including a number at Wilmington Grammar School for Boys. The majority of observations were carried out with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors conducted a number of shorter visits to 14 lessons to observe pupils' learning and to look at the quality of work in pupils' books.
- An inspector met with the headteacher of Wilmington Grammar School for Boys.
- Inspectors examined information about current pupils' achievement. They looked at a range of pupils' books to measure the impact of teachers' feedback.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders, teachers and staff, pupils from each key stage and four members of the governing body.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation relating to other aspects of the academy's work, including to safeguarding, child protection, the academy's development plan and analysis of its own performance, samples of minutes of meetings of the governing body, and information about the quality of teaching and performance of staff.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils in lessons and around the academy at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors reviewed records of attendance and behaviour, including bullying and racist incident logs.
- Inspectors took account of the 153 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 58 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lisa Moore, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Theresa Phillips	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paula Sargent	Ofsted Inspector
Phillip Storey	Ofsted Inspector
Roger Fenwick	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Doherty	Ofsted Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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