

Walthamstow School for Girls

Church Hill, Walthamstow, London E17 9RZ

Inspection dates

13–14 June 2018

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher provides exceptional leadership. She inspires staff and pupils to have the highest aspirations for themselves and others.
- Governors are ambitious and challenging. They contribute towards the school's success through rigorous monitoring and challenging of the school leaders, and themselves, to do better where necessary.
- The high quality of teaching leads to pupils making outstanding progress. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs to prepare well-structured lessons.
- Pupils achieve very high standards and make excellent progress across a range of subjects, including in English and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, receive highly effective support. They consistently make better progress than other pupils nationally.
- The curriculum is tailored to match the aspirations and interests of all pupils. The breadth of pupils' experiences, supported by an extensive extra-curricular programme, prepares pupils very well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are highly positive. They engage with work set in class diligently and participate in the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary both in lessons and during social times. They show a high level of consideration for each other, respecting diversity.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The large majority of parents are enthusiastic in their support for the school and pupils report feeling safe and happy here.
- At times, inconsistencies in the effectiveness of questioning by teachers result in missed opportunities to further deepen pupils' understanding.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers consistently use highly effective questioning to deepen pupils' understanding and learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Determined and bold leadership by the headteacher, her senior leaders and governors has ensured that this is an outstanding school. They are uncompromising in their efforts to provide the very best education for every pupil.
- Middle leaders are exceptional, and collaborate well to share best practice. They drive their teams with energy and enthusiasm. They share the strong moral purpose of the headteacher to ensure that no pupil is left behind. As a result, outcomes for pupils are outstanding, giving them essential life chances.
- Evaluation of the school's performance is accurate and never complacent. The leaders' starting point is that there is always room to be better. Senior leaders plan carefully to secure improvements in all pupils' academic progress and personal development.
- Senior and middle leaders lead by example. They provide highly effective challenge and support for teachers as well as access to a wide-ranging package of relevant training. Staff morale is high; staff are open to new ideas, embrace challenge and relish the opportunity to refine and improve their practice.
- Effective use of additional funding supports pupils who are behind in their literacy or mathematics when they transfer to Year 7. Work to ensure that disadvantaged pupils do as well as their peers is particularly successful, as is provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- The breadth of curriculum offered to girls takes into account their abilities, interests and career aspirations. The school builds on skills learned at primary school and provides a curriculum which ensures appropriate academic rigour, while fostering an enjoyment of learning.
- Valuable experiences, woven into the curriculum, help pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils are highly attuned to fairness and to what is right or wrong. They are encouraged to be socially responsible and are involved in a range of charity and fundraising activities throughout the year. For example, a group of Year 10 pupils have raised money to visit and support a school in Zanzibar.
- Parents are positive about the school. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, agree that the school is well led and managed, that the school responds well to their concerns and that it provides them with valuable information about their children's progress. As one parent commented: 'This school is amazing and I would love to recommend it to everyone.'

Governance of the school

- Governance is highly effective. Governors are committed and ambitious for the school's future. They bring a wealth of skills and educational experience, and undertake regular training and updates. As a result, they provide constructive support and challenge to leaders at all levels.
- Governors have an in-depth knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. While they work in close partnership with senior leaders they also

provide scrutiny and challenge. For example, leaders are held accountable for their work on a regular basis and governors pay frequent visits to the school during the working day to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions.

- Governors pay close attention to the school's work on safeguarding. They are well informed about the strength of the school's procedures and check regularly that systems are effective, ensuring that a culture of keeping pupils safe is thoroughly embedded.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Training for staff and governors on safeguarding children is comprehensive and up to date. Systems for ensuring staff suitability and for reporting any concerns are robust. The designated leader for safeguarding is very knowledgeable and has established strong partnerships with other agencies to support pupils with a range of social, emotional and health needs. Record-keeping is meticulous; the pastoral team regularly reviews individual cases.
- The school has a culture where the safety and well-being of pupils are paramount. Pupils recognise this, as do the parents who responded to Parent View.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment across the school are of a very high quality. This is because teachers and leaders have a shared commitment to providing a first-class education. Consequently, pupils make exceptionally strong progress from their starting points.
- Teachers have an excellent understanding of their pupils' strengths and weaknesses and most have very high expectations. Staff use their subject and assessment expertise to good effect to design and deliver stimulating and engaging learning activities. Inspectors saw strong examples of this across the curriculum, particularly in English, mathematics, French, music, art and drama.
- Teachers adapt their plans very well to meet the needs of different learners. There is not a one-size-fits-all approach in this school. Teachers structure tasks effectively for lower-attaining pupils so that they make excellent progress. The most able are challenged well through more difficult work and through discussion that leads to deeper understanding.
- There are very strong working relationships between staff and pupils based on mutual trust and respect. This creates a positive environment where pupils feel confident and encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils value the support that they get from their teachers and other adults.
- Pupils receive effective feedback in different forms which helps them make strong progress. Pupils know what they need to do to improve. They have the confidence to learn from their mistakes.
- Pupils' literacy skills are developed extremely well across subjects. Pupils use an

impressive vocabulary because teachers encourage them to use new words and explain their meanings. In a Year 7 music lesson, having listened to Vivaldi's Four Seasons, girls articulately explained and applied the terms tempo and dynamics. Pupils develop excellent communication skills because teachers structure class and group tasks very effectively. As a result, pupils fluently and confidently discuss challenging topics.

- Pupils hunger for information from teachers to satisfy their desire for learning. Teachers address difficult concepts skilfully and use powerful questioning to deepen pupils' understanding. Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to deepen pupils' learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school's values of Growth, Resilience, Energy, Empathy and Newness (GREEN) are lived by staff and pupils in all aspects of the school's work. As a result, GREEN makes a significant contribution to pupils' excellent attitudes to learning.
- Pupils are confident and eager to tell visitors why they are proud of their school. They are polite and friendly. In lessons, the girls engage fully in learning activities. They try hard when the work is challenging and are keen to ask and answer questions.
- Pupils feel safe and they are safe. Leaders and governors are clear that pupils' welfare has top priority. Effective systems are in place to offer guidance and support, involving external agencies where appropriate. Parents report that their children are well looked after and happy at the school. Pupils report that bullying is very rare. The school's records confirm this. Girls have total confidence in staff to help and support them should they have any concerns.
- Pupils have an extremely well-developed understanding and tolerance for others who are different from them. Pupils were keen to explain that they find racism, homophobia and any kind of discrimination unacceptable. Tolerance and diversity are strengths of the school.
- There are numerous opportunities for girls to develop their leadership skills. These range from taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award to mentoring of Year 7 girls by those in Year 11. Year 7 pupils reported that Year 11 mentoring was a key element of their successful induction into the school.
- Through a very well-planned curriculum, teachers ensure that the girls are resilient to failure, and understand how to behave responsibly and how to keep themselves safe, including from cyber bullying and extremism.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils regulate their own behaviour and show high levels of consideration to each other

and adults both in lessons and around the school. Pupils move around the school calmly and take good care of the school environment.

- This highly inclusive school provides an effective range of interventions to support pupils who join the school with more challenging behaviour. As a result, these pupils quickly settle and make excellent progress.
- Pupils very much enjoy coming to school. Consequently, attendance levels are high in comparison to other schools across the country. A small number of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities attend school less often than other pupils. Staff are working closely with parents and external agencies to improve the attendance of these pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Outcomes for pupils have been consistently strong for the past three years. Pupils leave Year 11 having made outstanding progress from their starting points. The school's methods for assessing pupils' progress are robust. They allow leaders to plan extra help for any pupils who may be falling behind. Consequently, pupils, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils, make progress that is well above that of their peers nationally.
- In 2016 and 2017, published performance information shows pupils' progress to be significantly above the national average across a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and languages. Progress in English was in the top 2% of schools nationally for both years.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, is better than that made by other pupils nationally because teachers have very high expectations of all pupils. Leaders use the additional funding judiciously to make sure that disadvantaged pupils make substantial progress.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress from their starting points. This is because of well targeted support through a structured programme of effective interventions. Recent changes in teaching are bolstering progress for this group. Current information supports forecasts of further improvement this year.
- Pupils who arrive from primary school needing help to catch up in English, mathematics or both receive effective support. As a result, they make strong progress.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop their writing across the curriculum, reflecting the school's focus on literacy. Work in pupils' books shows that they write extensively and receive frequent opportunities to revisit their work to make improvements. The library is well used and pupils talk enthusiastically about the books that they are reading.
- Pupils benefit from effective careers advice and guidance which prepares them well for the next stage of their education. The school arranges a wealth of trips, visits and speakers and promotes high aspirations. Year 11 and 10 pupils have ambitious plans for their futures and are very clear about how to get there.

School details

Unique reference number	103103
Local authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10052750

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	888
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gillian Barker
Headteacher	Meryl Davies
Telephone number	020 8509 9446
Website	www.wsfg.waltham.sch.uk
Email address	info@wsfg.waltham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 February 2018

Information about this school

- Walthamstow School for Girls is a secondary school in the London borough of Waltham Forest.
- The school is the lead school in the Waltham Forest Green Teaching School Alliance.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The school uses alternative provision at The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the time they leave school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in a range of subjects to observe pupils' learning. These visits were made jointly with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- To evaluate the quality of pupils' learning over time, inspectors reviewed a wide range of pupils' books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and governors. Inspectors also met with a group of teachers and with pupils from key stages 3 and 4. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority on the telephone.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plans, monitoring and assessment records, minutes of governing body meetings, and case studies of vulnerable pupils who receive additional support. Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding procedures and related policies, including those for behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered 130 responses received from parents to Ofsted's survey and a parental view received by email. Altogether, 57 staff responses and 296 pupil responses to Ofsted's surveys were considered. Inspectors also considered the views expressed by many pupils during lessons and social times.

Inspection team

Carolyn Dickinson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Olivia Cole	Ofsted Inspector
David Bromfield	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Jones	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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