

Inspection of South Wilts Grammar School for Girls

Stratford Road, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 3JJ

Inspection dates: 22–23 October 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a thriving school. Pupils are proud to be part of it. They talk enthusiastically about the 'SWGS family'. Pupils feel safe and are well looked after. Year 7 pupils told inspectors that teachers helped them to settle in quickly when they started. They have really enjoyed their first term.

Senior leaders expect high academic standards, but they place emphasis on pupils' personal development as well. Every pupil who joins the school is a high attainer. Teachers know them as individuals and work hard to help them overcome any difficulties in learning.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. They are very polite and courteous in lessons. They show a great determination to succeed. Pupils are equally enthusiastic in extra-curricular activities. Pupils mix together well. For example, at lunchtime, inspectors saw pupils of different ages singing beautifully together in the school choir. The school does not tolerate bullying.

The school is growing. It is increasing the number of girls it accepts each year and preparing to admit boys to the sixth form. Senior leaders are skilfully balancing the best traditions of the school with modernisation as it expands.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The great majority of teachers are experts in their fields. They are passionate about their subjects and they pass on their enthusiasm to pupils.

The curriculum is well balanced. Most pupils take the English Baccalaureate suite of GCSE subjects in key stage 4. However, pupils have a genuine choice from many other options. Students study a wide variety of subjects in the sixth form: 26 A-level courses are available.

Curriculum leaders plan teaching carefully. They check the organisation of learning so that pupils receive a well-designed curriculum. For example, teaching ensures that pupils develop a good understanding of the relationships between different disciplines within science.

Pupils make very strong progress in key stage 4. By the end of Year 11, pupils gain a deep knowledge of their chosen subjects. Pupils debate well in English. In history, pupils develop a strong understanding of how to interpret historical sources. Pupils' considerable academic success means that they are well placed for the next stage of their education. A high proportion of pupils join the sixth form when they finish Year 11.

Pupils from other schools can enrol in the sixth form. The school welcomes them.

Plans for admitting boys into the sixth form next year are well advanced. Teaching is well planned and organised. Even so, students' progress on A-level courses is not as strong as in the main school.

Pupils' eagerness to learn makes a significant contribution to the success of the school. Pupils debate animatedly with each other and immerse themselves in their work. Teachers encourage 'academic risk taking'. As a result, there is a strong culture of learning and mutual support between pupils. Many older pupils regularly support younger pupils to succeed.

Senior leaders have designed an effective programme of personal development. They ensure that pupils receive good advice about staying healthy, both physically and mentally.

Teaching helps pupils explore many moral and social issues. Pupils throw themselves wholeheartedly into a wide range of charity work. These experiences provide pupils with a strong grounding for life in modern Britain.

Pupils get good advice about the careers they might follow. Sixth-form tutors provide students with good-quality advice about how to apply to university. A high proportion of sixth-form students secure places at prestigious universities each year. However, leaders have not yet established a comprehensive plan to develop careers education further.

The school has a low proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders take their responsibilities for these pupils seriously. They strive to provide the extra help required.

This school is well led. The headteacher and her senior team provide highly principled leadership. Teachers develop their skills quickly because leaders place a high value on professional learning.

Governors are enthusiastic in their commitment to the school. Their vision has maintained the high quality of education through a period of expansion. Governors and senior leaders work well together. They trust and respect each other. However, governors have not paid close enough attention to some areas of the school's performance in recent years.

Parents appreciate senior leaders' work. As one parent commented, 'We have seen just how far our daughter has come over the last two years, and this is largely down to the supporting character of SWGS and the talent and dedication of the staff.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The headteacher makes the welfare and safety of pupils her top priority. Along with other senior leaders, she insists that all staff are vigilant. Staff receive regular

training in safeguarding, so they know what to look for and how to report it.

The school takes any incident seriously. Staff learn and improve their systems when this is necessary.

Through the curriculum, assemblies and other events, pupils receive good advice about how to stay safe when they are outside school. This advice helps pupils to avoid danger and become more resilient when they face risky situations.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils make very strong progress in the main school and reach high standards at the end of Year 11. Many pupils reach the top three grades in their GCSE examinations. Sixth-form students' progress is in line with the national average. The school should ensure that more students in the sixth form make similarly strong progress in their A-level courses as in the main school.
- Governors understand their roles. They are well organised and skilled. Nevertheless, they must sharpen their scrutiny of information about the performance of the school so that they can challenge leaders more effectively.
- Senior leaders work effectively with curriculum leaders to review the curriculum, and they continually seek improvements to its implementation. However, they need to develop a more consistent understanding among staff of the school's fundamental aims for the curriculum.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	136391
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10111636
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1067
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	307
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Chris Child
Headteacher	Michele Chilcott
Website	www.swgs.wilts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened as an academy in January 2011. The predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected in October 2007, when it was judged outstanding.
- Pupils join the school having taken the 11+ exam. The school draws pupils from 70 primary schools over a wide geographic area.
- The school increased its admission number in Year 7 from 128 to 150 in 2015, and then from 150 to 160 in 2017.
- The school is a member of the South West Academic Trust, which is a group of grammar schools located in the South West of England.
- The school's sixth form has been run jointly with another local school in recent years. This arrangement will cease at the end of this academic year.
- The school uses one alternative education provider, GUL equine therapy, for part-time provision.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers. The lead inspector met with the vice-chair of the governing body and 10 other governors.
- English, mathematics, science and history were considered as part of this inspection. In each of these subjects, inspectors met with the curriculum leader, visited lessons, spoke with pupils and considered their written work.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's policies relating to safeguarding, spoke with the designated safeguarding leader and considered records of the pre-employment suitability checks that the school makes on its staff. Inspectors asked many pupils for their opinions about safety, behaviour and bullying. Inspectors carefully considered the school's response to safeguarding incidents in the past.

Inspection team

Paul Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Benjamin Antell	Ofsted Inspector
Gill Hickling	Ofsted Inspector
David New	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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