

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Wilmington Grammar School for Girls

Wilmington Grange, Parsons Lane, Wilmington, Dartford, Kent, DA2 7BB

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Inspection dates:

5 and 6 October 2021

## **Outcome**

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

This is a welcoming, happy and inclusive school with a real sense of community. Relationships among staff and pupils are very strong. Pupils know that teachers expect them to focus on the school's 'REACH' values (respect and resilience, equality, achievement, community, honesty and integrity) and they respond with great enthusiasm. Pupils are proud of their school and their behaviour is exemplary.

Pupils greatly value the support they receive from adults and feel safe. If they have any concerns, such as bullying, they know that staff will do all they can to help. Pupils respect each other's cultures and are keen to lead activities to promote equality and diversity.

Pupils have a thirst for learning. They are very focused in lessons and express their ideas with great eloquence. They know that teachers have high expectations of them and they rise to the challenge. Sixth-form students enjoy working in mixed-gender classes. Pupils across the school achieve well. However, in some subjects the curriculum is not ambitious enough.

There is an enormous range of exciting extra-curricular activities on offer. These include sports, arts and many others. Pupils asked for a debating club, which was swiftly enabled. Many pupils are enthusiastic participants in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

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

One parent responding to Ofsted Parent View remarked that 'The school is being steered by the right captain.' The headteacher is leading a team of very able senior leaders with great determination and clear direction. Governors provide helpful support and challenge in equal measure.

Leaders' expectations of all pupils are very high. They have ensured that pupils study a broad range of subjects in Years 7 to 9. For example, all pupils study either French or Mandarin in Year 7, and in Year 8 all pupils learn Spanish as their second language. Pupils in Year 7 follow an 'Epistemic Insight' programme which links subjects together and helps them develop their skills of enquiry. Almost all pupils in Years 10 and 11 study subjects that are part of the English Baccalaureate and they make good progress in these subjects. The sixth-form curriculum provides progression routes for all students. They can choose from a wide range of courses, including some unusual ones such as forensic science. The high-quality careers education programme from Year 7 to 13 ensures that all pupils have the information they need to decide their next steps. Increasing numbers of Year 13 students are gaining places at universities in the Russell Group.

Subject leaders have thought about the order in which they teach subject content so that pupils can build their skills and knowledge in a logical way, although this is less developed in the sixth form. In some subjects, such as languages, science and history, teachers have designed ambitious plans which have clearly defined learning goals. Teachers use these plans to deliver interesting lessons that make pupils think hard and enable them to grasp more-difficult concepts. However, in some subjects, such as geography and English, teaching plans are not as well developed. Pupils continue to learn well in these subjects because they are highly motivated, but they are not achieving as well as they could because curriculum planning is not ambitious enough, or clear enough about the key knowledge that pupils are expected to remember.

Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. In lessons, they assess pupils' understanding by asking probing questions. Leaders ask teachers to formally assess pupils' learning at sensible intervals. The information gathered is used to support pupils who might need extra help and support.

The school has high ambition for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and has good systems in place for identifying them. Pupils with SEND study the same range of subjects as their peers. Those who need support with reading comprehension are helped to understand key vocabulary before a lesson is taught. Leaders make sure that staff have regular training to help them support pupils with SEND, as well as disadvantaged pupils. There is little difference between the achievements of pupils with SEND and their peers.

Leaders have thought carefully about developing pupils' understanding of the world around them. Pupils told us that they value their personal, social and health education lessons with their tutors and outside speakers. There is an impressive programme in place which is quickly adapted to respond to issues that arise locally or nationally. Pupils learn about issues that affect their well-being and safety, such as gang culture and healthy relationships, as well as exploring wider topics such as the rule of law. Teachers support pupils to become confident and aspirational young people.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that the sequencing and ambition of the curriculum may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff and governors receive regular training on safeguarding. Everybody understands how to use the new online system to refer safeguarding concerns, and these are swiftly and effectively followed up. Leaders liaise with outside agencies to make sure that pupils get any extra support they may need. Record-keeping is thorough and robust.

Pupils know who to talk to if they have a concern. They know how to keep themselves safe from threats they may encounter, including when online. They appreciate the support and guidance they receive from staff, particularly for their mental health.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects curriculum plans are not ambitious enough, with clear learning goals and coherent progression, including in the sixth form. As a result, pupils are not learning more and remembering more so that they make as much progress as they could. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is ambitious and well sequenced.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in November 2015.

## 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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 are the school and you are 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137250
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10199464
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,052
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	248
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	John Webster
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michelle Lawson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.gsgw.org.uk/">http://www.gsgw.org.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3 – 4 November 2015, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2019. The chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer were both appointed in September 2021.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers, although only one had any pupils from the school attending at the time of the inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, pupils and sixth-form students, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and one trustee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, modern foreign languages, geography and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Through discussions with leaders, governors, trustees, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. They also viewed the school website and policies. They looked at records related to safeguarding, including checks on adults working at the school.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including newly qualified teachers, about behaviour and their workload in school.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff via 46 responses, 198 parent responses and 285 pupil responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Paula Sargent, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Anne Cullum

Ofsted Inspector

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