

Inspection of Watford Grammar School for Boys

Rickmansworth Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD18 7JF

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected

Ofsted has not previously inspected Watford Grammar School for Boys under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Watford Grammar School for Boys to be outstanding before it opened as Watford Grammar School for Boys as a result of conversion to academy status.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils excel. It is a remarkably friendly and welcoming school. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They value how teachers are highly ambitious for them. Pupils rise to the challenges their teachers set them and produce high-quality work. They thrive in the nurturing culture that staff have created. Their excellent attitudes enable them to make the most of the school's exceptional facilities and opportunities on offer. Pupils are proud of their school and their achievements.

Pupils' behaviour is superb. Classrooms and corridors are calm. Pupils are polite and demonstrate exemplary manners. They say that they do not worry about bullying as adults will help if others are unkind to them. Pupils who find it harder to manage their feelings, or who struggle with their work, get effective support.

Pupils love the wide range of exciting visits, visitors and clubs provided for them. Pupils excel in sport and music. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to explore new interests and build self-confidence and resilience.

By the time pupils leave school, they are exceedingly well prepared for adult life.

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

Leaders, including governors, provide inspirational leadership. There is a relentless determination to ensure that all pupils achieve the best they can. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school's leadership and enjoy working at the school. They value the extensive training and developmental opportunities provided.

The school provides an exceptional quality of education for its pupils. Subject leaders and teachers have expert subject knowledge. Teachers use the latest educational research to inform their planning. Teachers use these plans to teach lessons that build on pupils' prior learning. The curriculum is purposeful and ambitious. Pupils develop deep insights into their subjects through discussion and debate. They delight in this challenge. Teachers make regular checks on how well pupils are doing. They spot misconceptions quickly and give pupils good advice on how to deepen their understanding.

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND are well supported so that they are fully involved in school life. Staff make expert use of information in pupils' education, health and care plans to decide the best way for each pupil to learn. Pupils with SEND, and disadvantaged pupils, progress exceptionally well in the curriculum.

In the sixth form, leaders have high expectations of students. Most of them go on to the university of their choice. The curriculum meets the needs of all students extremely well. Students are provided with a wide range of enrichment activities beyond academic study. Students lead their own clubs and societies. Students are

extremely positive about their education and they say that they are very well supported in the sixth form.

Pupils have a great thirst for learning. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Expectations of pupils are clear and consistent. Pupils show respect to their friends, teachers and visitors. They approach all aspects of life with high levels of maturity. Pupils have respectful relationships with staff. These contribute strongly to pupils' highly positive attitudes to learning.

Leaders prioritise pupils' well-being. Excellent pastoral care is well established. Pastoral leaders and tutors get to know pupils well and monitor closely how well they are doing. This ensures that pupils attend regularly, behave well and know whom to talk to if they have any concerns. Pupils' personal development is promoted well through an extensive programme focusing on their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, and on their well-being. They understand deeply why it is important to treat everyone equally. All secure their next steps.

The school offers a multitude of extra-curricular opportunities. Debating, chess, mathematics competitions, competitive sport and music are areas in which the school enjoys a national reputation. Leaders organise many educational visits and activities that enhance the curriculum.

Students receive high-quality, impartial advice about careers and future study. The vast majority are inspired and motivated to fulfil their potential. Some pupils go on to sixth-form college to study appropriate courses they are interested in. The overwhelming majority who study in the sixth form go on to study at highly respected universities. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Governors, who are also trustees, bring a range of essential qualities and experiences to their role. They carry out their statutory duties diligently. To illustrate, governors are tenacious in their analysis of the school's progress. They use this information to hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders make the necessary checks when appointing new staff. Leaders make sure that the well-being of every pupil is of the highest importance. Staff are diligent when it comes to their safeguarding responsibilities. All incidents are recorded systematically. Any concerns about pupils' safety or welfare are swiftly reported and promptly followed up by the safeguarding team. They work efficiently with external professionals to make sure that pupils get the help they need.

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

Unique reference number	136276
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10199289
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	1520
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	430
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stephen Nokes
Headteacher	Ian Cooksey
Website	www.watfordboys.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Watford Grammar School for Boys converted to become an academy on 1 September 2010. When its predecessor school, known by the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted in 2006, it was judged to be outstanding.
- There have been changes of staff and governors, including a new headteacher and a new chair of the governing body, since the previous inspection.
- The school uses Chessbrook Education Support Centre, based at Tolpits Lane, Watford, Hertfordshire WD18 6LJ, as alternative provision for a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and other school staff.
- The lead inspector met with a group of trustees, including the chair of the board of trustees. The lead inspector also spoke to a representative from the local authority by telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, physical education, geography and PSHE. For each of these subjects, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to staff, looked at samples of pupils' work and met with pupils to discuss their experience of learning. Inspectors also talked to pupils informally about the school.
- Inspectors reviewed documents relating to safeguarding. They met with the leader responsible for safeguarding, and spoke to pupils, staff and governors about safeguarding matters.
- Inspectors observed pupils at social times, at lunchtime and at breaktime.
- Inspectors also took account of the 141 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, and 131 additional free-text responses. Inspectors considered the views of 87 members of staff who responded to Ofsted's survey for staff. Inspectors took into account the views of 530 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Paul Lawrence	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Kerridge	Ofsted Inspector
John Mitcheson	Her Majesty's Inspector

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