

Inspection of a good school: Wilmington Academy

Common Lane, Wilmington, Kent DA2 7DR

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 February 2022

Outcome

Wilmington Academy continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a section 5 inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils happily attend this welcoming and caring school. A sense of community permeates Wilmington Academy. Pupils recognise that everyone is different, and they embrace this. As one pupil said to the lead inspector: 'It is a celebration of culture and different backgrounds here, a joyous atmosphere.' Pupils sometimes experience unkind comments, but staff do not tolerate this and tackle these situations very well.

Staff expect a lot from pupils and pupils happily rise to the challenge. The respect they have for staff means that they behave well and work hard to do their individual colleges proud.

Pupils are taught to think about their role in the community, but also in the world. They are keen to explore the impact people have on the world and how their own individual actions can make a difference. For example, pupils are working hard to tidy up litter in the local area. They are also exploring how sustainable their school is and what more the school can do to improve this.

A range of extra-curricular activities and experiences encourage pupils to believe in themselves and see that anything is possible. Consequently, pupils are not afraid to take a risk and participate in something new.

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

A well-thought-out, ambitious curriculum ensures that pupils develop a deep understanding of a wide range of subjects during their time at Wilmington Academy. Leaders have invested time and energy into thinking about the curriculum and how it prepares pupils for later life. They have identified the precise order in which pupils

experience new learning from Years 7 to 11, as well as in the sixth form. This means that they use what they already know to help them learn new concepts with success. As a result, they make excellent progress in each of the subjects they study.

Leaders are focused on the English baccalaureate being at the heart of the school, however they know that too few pupils choose to study languages at key stage 4. As a result, leaders have introduced several initiatives to encourage more pupils to develop a love of languages. For example, they recently organised for a motivational speaker to talk to pupils about language learning. Leaders have clear plans in place to ensure that their aim comes to fruition.

Woven into the fabric of the curriculum are the 10 international baccalaureate learner profile characteristics. Pupils are often encouraged to be 'risk takers' in lessons when answering questions. They develop confidence and resilience. During the inspection, pupils showed that they are inquirers, thinkers and communicators. These characteristics help them to become well-rounded individuals and recognise the responsibility they have in the world.

Most staff are experts in the subjects they teach. This leads to confident teachers who deliver engaging lessons that are well matched to the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The needs of pupils, particularly those with SEND, are well known to teachers. Leaders understand the importance of pupils being able to read so that it does not become a barrier to learning. Those who struggle are supported well.

Leaders have developed a way of checking pupils' learning that is highly consistent across the school. Pupils find the feedback they receive from teachers useful. Teachers use the information they collect about pupils' learning to personalise lessons so that every pupil can progress as quickly as possible. The subtle yet effective use of technology in the classroom is having a positive impact.

Pupils behave with high levels of respect in lessons and at social times. They know what staff expect of them and they want to please. Very occasionally, a small minority of pupils find this more difficult and need reminders. Staff deal with these situations consistently well.

Governors and Leigh Academies Trust hold leaders to account very effectively. They are passionate and committed to ensuring the school is the best it can be. They know the school very well and understand how to challenge and support leaders to achieve this goal.

The workload and well-being of staff are taken seriously. There are high levels of engagement between leaders and staff and careful thought has been given to making sure that what staff are asked to do is in the best interests of pupils.

The quality of education is likely to be better than good. In discussion with the principal, we agreed that further raising the profile of languages, and increasing the number of

pupils who choose to study languages in key stage 4, may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff work tirelessly to get to know pupils and their circumstances. They are trained well to spot signs that might suggest a pupil is at risk and they routinely pass on their concerns to leaders. Leaders take swift and appropriate actions to ensure that referrals are made to external agencies. Designated safeguarding leads know what actions have been taken and what support is in place for pupils and their families. However, while the right actions are taken and the right support is provided, record-keeping is not always as detailed and precise as it could be. Leaders accept that this needs to be further strengthened.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2013.

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	136205
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10211459
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1354
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	157
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Frank Green
Principal	Michael Gore
Website	www.wilmingtonacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Wilmington Academy is an academy within Leigh Academies Trust.
- The academy is an International Baccalaureate World School which is registered for the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme and the International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme.
- The principal took up his post since the last inspection, however he previously held other leadership posts in the school.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for 20 pupils with autism spectrum disorder. This is known as The Iris Centre.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at two registered education providers and one charity that is not a registered education provider.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: modern foreign languages, English, mathematics, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with multi-academy trust and school leaders, staff, pupils and those with responsibility for governance, including the chair of the academy board.
- Inspectors held discussions with three alternative provision education providers.
- Inspectors visited the sixth-form provision.
- Inspectors observed tutor time and break- and lunchtime.
- Inspectors scrutinised behaviour and bullying records.
- Inspectors scrutinised academy board meeting minutes, records of visits to the school by members of the academy board and records of a recent visit to the school by the local authority.
- Inspectors met with the acting special educational needs coordinator to discuss the provision for pupils with SEND. The lead inspector also visited The Iris Centre: the school's specially resourced provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and comments made by those who responded.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors looked at the school's website and policies, met with designated safeguarding leads and spoke with pupils and staff. They scrutinised school records of the safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school and spoke with governors. They scrutinised a selection of child protection records.

Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Steve Baker

Ofsted Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates:
<http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022