

Inspection of a good school: Westminster City School

55 Palace Street, London SW1E 5HJ

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 March 2022

Outcome

Westminster City School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

All pupils have access to a rich curriculum and a wide range of opportunities, including work experience and mentoring. Leaders encourage pupils to aim high in their learning and to develop their talents. They also support pupils to be ambitious about their future careers. From the start, pupils receive effective targeted support to help them meet their ambitions. Pupils are well prepared to make choices, for example for GCSE and post-16 options. In science, for instance, guest speakers and visits during science week introduced pupils to a wide range of science-based careers. The sixth form is increasingly popular, and leaders use the school's location to enrich learning and provide additional opportunities for pupils.

Pupils are happy and safe. They typically spoke enthusiastically about their school and said that the school community feels like a family.

The rewards system celebrates and promotes pupils' positive behaviour. This means that little time is lost to any off-task behaviour. On the rare occasions on which any bullying occurs, staff take effective action to deal with it.

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

Leaders have introduced a broad and ambitious curriculum for all pupils. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils study the full range of national curriculum subjects. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. They plan learning carefully so that pupils know more and remember more. Teachers encourage pupils to go over previous learning regularly, which helps pupils to remember what they have already learned. Learning is sequenced to ensure that all pupils reach the same ambitious goals. Leaders have thought carefully about how to capture pupils' wider interest in the subjects they learn. In science, an emphasis on practical work helps to ensure that pupils build and apply their knowledge and skills securely.

Leaders give teachers comprehensive information about the pupils they teach, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and students who join the school in the sixth form. In most cases, teachers use this information effectively, meaning that pupils are given appropriate support to access the ambitious curriculum. Teachers are typically skilled at assessing pupils' understanding in order to inform teaching and develop pupils' learning further. However, leaders have identified that this is not the case in all subjects, particularly for pupils with SEND. They are working effectively to address this through training for staff.

Leaders have prioritised reading. Where pupils need additional help with reading, they receive phonics catch-up to help them make swift improvements. In Years 7 and 8, pupils read regularly in English lessons. This supports pupils' reading fluency and independence. Leaders also ensure that all pupils experience a breadth of literature, including through the tutor reading programme. This was one of several measures, including an alumni tutoring programme, that leaders put in place to help pupils make up lost learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to study a wide range of subjects. Leaders ensure that all pupils are able to pursue their particular interests. For example, any pupil who wishes to may study qualifications in separate sciences. All pupils also study a humanities subject and religious studies to GCSE. An increasing number of pupils also choose to study a modern foreign language. The proportion of pupils choosing to take up creative GCSE subjects, especially art, design and technology, and music, is strong.

In the sixth form, expert teachers offer clear instruction, and students feel strongly supported. Teachers give students regular feedback on their work and address any misconceptions. Sixth-form students spoke positively about this, as well as about the quality of careers advice they receive.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, including in music, drama, sport and debating. They are glad that these are on offer again following the pandemic. Leaders enrich this programme with links to businesses and organisations that are based locally.

Pupils trust staff to support and help them. Low-level disruption to learning the curriculum is rare. Pupils appreciate the clear rewards and sanctions system that leaders have put in place to ensure that the school is calm and orderly. Older pupils spoke about the improvements that leaders have introduced to learning and behaviour since the arrival of the new headteacher.

Leaders have responded to feedback from pupils, parents and carers about the provision for pupils' wider development. Leaders have recently put in place a broader curriculum which aims to strengthen the development of pupils' understanding in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. A comprehensive programme of assemblies is also used to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are encouraged to develop an understanding of different identities and the importance of respect and tolerance.

Leaders and governors are proud of and ambitious for the school. They consider staff workload carefully, for example when introducing recent changes to the school's feedback policy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have set up secure systems to identify and support pupils' needs. They consider carefully a wide range of issues that may be affecting vulnerable pupils. This includes, for example, concerns about behaviour and attendance.

Staff are well trained in identifying where there may be concerns and are vigilant in reporting them. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding know pupils very well and also understand the school's local context. This means that leaders and staff work effectively with pupils and their families, and tailor support to their needs. Leaders have set up a range of ways to support pupils, including specialist staff, and work with wider agencies where necessary. Pupils trust staff to help them and know how to report any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have identified that assessment is not used consistently well across all subjects to measure pupils' understanding and inform subsequent teaching. This is especially important for pupils with SEND. This means that some pupils are not as well supported as they could be to develop their understanding. Leaders need to ensure that training enables all staff to use assessment to check pupils' understanding and meet pupils' needs across the curriculum.

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 on 7 January 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	138312
Local authority	Westminster
Inspection number	10211110
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	781
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	William Wells
Headteacher	Peter Broughton
Website	www.wcsch.com
Date of previous inspection	10 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has joined the school and a new chair of the governing body has been appointed.
- The school makes occasional use of two registered alternative providers, although at the time of inspection no pupils were registered there.
- The school also engages in dual-registered placements with other schools. At the time of this inspection, a small number of pupils on the school's roll were attending other schools, and a small number of pupils on the roll of other schools were attending this school.
- The school has a non-denominational Christian ethos.

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 met with the headteacher and other members of the leadership team. They spoke with leaders with responsibility for inclusion. They also spoke with members of the governing body and the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, geography and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons and looked at work in history, art, Spanish, music and mathematics.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in every year group about safeguarding, including students in the sixth form. They considered parent responses to the online survey Parent View, responses to the survey for staff, and the responses of pupils to a separate online survey for them. Inspectors also spoke with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and reviewed policies and records relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the provision for pupils' wider development, including the programme for PSHE education.

Inspection team

Alice Clay, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Thomas Hatchett

Ofsted Inspector

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