

# Inspection of Weald of Kent Grammar School

Tudeley Lane, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 2JP

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Inspection dates: 26 and 27 April 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Sixth-form provision

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

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

Pupils are encouraged to work hard and aim for personal success. They know that their teachers want them to do well, and most pupils feel supported in meeting these expectations. Pupils achieve well and study a broad range of subjects with a strong focus on academic excellence.

Pupils learn about British values and the importance of diversity and equality. They are encouraged to listen to each other and form points of view about important issues. Although there are some opportunities in the school for pupils to take on leadership roles, these are limited in scope. Some pupils would like greater opportunities to have their voices heard on issues that are important to them.

While most pupils feel safe at school, a significant number are concerned about bullying. Many pupils do not feel able to talk to adults in school about their worries. Some pupils are also reluctant to talk to adults about their mental health and well-being and this prevents them from asking for help when they need it. When pupils do speak to adults in school about these issues, they receive effective support.

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

Pupils typically behave well at this school. They join in with learning and show enthusiasm in lessons. However, not all teachers are consistent in managing pupils' behaviour. Some are uncertain about how to apply the school's behaviour policy and would like clearer guidance and training. Pupils sometimes feel confused about teachers' expectations of them, particularly at social times and between lessons.

Leaders' approach to tackling bullying is not sufficiently strategic or urgent. This has damaged the confidence of many pupils in the effectiveness of the school's leadership. Some pupils are reluctant to express their concerns about bullying because they do not think that these will be listened to or acted on.

Pupils learn well at the school. Leaders have developed a broad and ambitious curriculum. They have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers have expert knowledge of the subjects they teach and use this to challenge pupils. At times, teachers do not check that pupils have understood what has been taught before moving on. This results in some pupils developing gaps in their learning. This is also the case in the sixth form. Leaders rightly recognise this inconsistency and have identified it as a focus in training.

Leaders have made the development of pupils' literacy a priority. Pupils talk enthusiastically about books they are reading either in class or at home. Teachers focus on new vocabulary as part of lessons. Leaders have created opportunities for pupils to develop their debating skills. This work has been recently introduced and is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' confidence to express their points of view.

Leaders have set about developing a programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education that is engaging and relevant to pupils. Pupils are interested and inspired by some of the newly introduced topics that they have studied very recently. However, over time, pupils' PSHE education lessons have not given them the confidence to apply their learning to their everyday lives. These lessons have not helped to create a culture where pupils feel confident to discuss things that are worrying them with adults in school. Students in the sixth form are much more positive about the impact and relevance of their PSHE education lessons.

Pupils receive appropriate advice about careers and next steps. While leaders ensure that this includes the full range of options, some pupils would like a greater focus on vocational routes, including apprenticeships. Students in the sixth form appreciate the support they receive with university applications. Some students would like information about a wide range of careers to be more easily available.

The range of extra-curricular activities available does not currently reflect the breadth of pupils' interests. Leaders recognise that the extra-curricular offer needs to be broader and are in the process of introducing new opportunities across the school's two sites.

Leaders have thought carefully about the training programme for staff so that it reflects the school's priorities and the needs of individual staff. Teachers who are early in their career feel well supported. Some staff do not feel that leaders take their workload into account when making decisions.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that all staff receive regular and up-to-date safeguarding training. When staff have concerns about a pupil's well-being, they follow the school procedures by logging these promptly. Senior leaders and pastoral staff follow up on any issues identified quickly and effectively. Referrals to external agencies are made when appropriate. The necessary pre-employment checks are carried out on new staff and accurate records kept. Trustees understand their duties with regard to safeguarding and ensure that the school's procedures are effective.

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

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

- A significant proportion of pupils do not feel comfortable in talking to adults in school about bullying. This has resulted in pupils' concerns about bullying going unnoticed by leaders. Leaders must address this aspect of the school's culture and create an environment in which pupils feel confident to come forward and talk to adults in school if they are worried. Trustees should check that leaders' actions are effective in securing this change.

- Some staff are not consistent in applying the school's behaviour policy. This has resulted in some pupils feeling unfairly treated. Leaders must ensure that expectations of pupils and staff are clearly understood by all and that training is provided where necessary to support this.
- Sometimes, teachers move on to new learning before pupils have understood what is being taught. When this happens, some pupils are left behind because they cannot access what comes next. Leaders have identified this as a focus area for staff training and should continue to make sure that this practice becomes consistent.

## 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

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|---|--|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 136455   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | Kent   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10199404   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                             | 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>        | 1,923  |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 401  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                      | Board of trustees                                    |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                             | Antonia Rubin  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                                | Elizabeth Bone                                       |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.wealdgs.org">www.wealdgs.org</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                | Not previously inspected                             |

## Information about this school

- Weald of Kent Grammar School converted to become an academy in February 2011. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted in April 2007, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- This school operates as a single-academy trust split across two sites: one in Sevenoaks and one in Tonbridge.
- The school makes use of two registered alternative providers.
- 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.

## 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 had 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: English, mathematics, science, geography, physical education and languages. 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 also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with members of the senior leadership team and trustees about their roles.
- Inspectors judged the effectiveness of safeguarding by talking to leaders, looking at written records and holding meetings with teachers, pupils and staff.
- Inspectors took into account the survey responses from pupils, parents and carers, and staff. They conducted meetings with groups of pupils in all key stages.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of teaching and non-teaching staff about aspects of their roles, including their workload and well-being. They also spoke to recently qualified teachers about the support and training they receive.

## Inspection team

|                               |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Chris Ellison, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Louise Walker                 | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Richard Kearsley              | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Cathy Reid                    | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Sue Bzikot                    | Ofsted Inspector        |

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