

Inspection of Wirral Grammar School for Boys

Cross Lane, Bebington, Wirral, Merseyside CH63 3AQ

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected Wirral Grammar School for Boys as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, do their very best to meet leaders' high expectations for their academic achievement and personal development. Consequently, pupils and students achieve well in a wide range of subjects.

Pupils enjoy a wealth of high-quality opportunities that reflect leaders' aim 'to develop each individual's potential to the full'. Pupils and students excel in the many leadership roles that they are given. These include volunteering in the community and supporting pupils at local primary schools. Students in the sixth form play a central role in the life of the school. For example, they coordinate a peer support group for younger pupils.

Pupils and students feel safe in school. They know there are lots of staff they can talk to about their worries. Pupils, students and staff work together on the anti-bullying committee. Rare instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They support one another and show genuine respect to staff. Pupils were proud to tell inspectors how they celebrate diversity. They enjoy many ways of expressing themselves, such as in the popular LGBTQ+ 'plus club' and the many different creative and artistic groups.

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

Pupils and students study a broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders have ensured that this is equally ambitious for all, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Almost all key stage 4 pupils study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects.

Subject leaders have made sure that, in the majority of subjects, the curriculum is well thought out. This ensures that teachers are in no doubt about what they should be delivering and when this should be taught. As a result, in these subjects, pupils achieve well. However, in a small number of subjects, teachers are not as clear about the building blocks of knowledge that pupils require for subsequent learning. At times, this results in teachers delivering the curriculum less well. This means that pupils do not learn as well as they should in these subjects.

Teachers are experts in their subjects. They explain new ideas clearly and help pupils to make links to their previous learning. As a result, pupils remember what they have learned over time. Students in the sixth form value the increased independence that they are given in their learning. They feel very well supported by their teachers. Leaders have made sure that teachers use assessment strategies carefully. They do this at timely intervals so that teachers can respond to pupils' gaps in knowledge.

Leaders have robust systems in place to accurately identify the needs of pupils and students with SEND. Teachers use effective strategies to adapt their teaching so that these pupils can learn just as well as their peers.

Leaders have identified a small number of pupils who need extra help with reading. However, leaders are not clear enough about the reasons that these pupils struggle with reading. This means that teachers do not always give them the right kind of help soon enough. Leaders have suitable plans in place to ensure that these pupils receive appropriate help and catch up with their reading quickly.

Around the school, pupils and students behave exceptionally well. They know how to manage their own behaviour and treat others respectfully and with kindness. In lessons, they are independent and keen to learn. Learning is not disrupted by poor behaviour. Leaders make sure that any poor behaviour is dealt with effectively. They help pupils to understand how their actions and words impact others.

Pupils' personal development flows through all aspects of school life. Leaders have created a comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. This ensures that pupils and students learn about prejudice, resilience and how to look after their mental health. This curriculum is enhanced through wider opportunities, such as charity fundraising, debating societies and visits to places of worship. Leaders ensure that pupils and students feel that their voices are heard when making decisions about the school.

Pupils in Years 7 to 13 access a thorough careers programme. They enjoy regular visits from employers. Alumni regularly visit the school to share their careers experiences with pupils and students. Year 10 pupils and Year 12 students value their work experience opportunities. As a result, they are well prepared for life beyond school.

Senior leaders and governors know the school well. They check that their high expectations for the curriculum are happening in practice. Because of this, senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of education that pupils and students receive. Governors are well informed and play an active role in moving the school forward. They understand leaders' priorities and provide appropriate challenge and support in equal measure.

Staff value the professional development that leaders provide. The majority of staff appreciate the steps that senior leaders have taken to improve their well-being. However, a minority of staff reported concerns about their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are alert to safeguarding issues and have a proactive approach to keeping pupils and students safe. Staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training.

They know how to spot when a pupil or student might be at risk. Records show that when staff report any concerns, leaders act on these in a timely way.

Leaders respond effectively to safeguarding concerns and make sure that pupils and students quickly get the right help. Leaders work effectively with local agencies, including the neighbouring girls' school, to provide joined-up support to pupils and their families when needed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a minority of subjects, leaders have not ensured that teachers are clear enough about the building blocks of knowledge that pupils and students need for subsequent learning. At times, this hinders teachers in designing learning, and pupils do not experience the depth of learning that they should. Leaders should ensure that teachers are clear about the knowledge that pupils and students will learn and that teachers deliver these curriculums effectively.

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.

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	137476
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10226378
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
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	1,057
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	271
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Lawrence
Headteacher	Simon Ascroft
Website	www.wirralgrammarboys.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Wirral Grammar School for Boys converted to become an academy school in September 2011. When its predecessor school, Wirral Grammar School for Boys, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The current headteacher was appointed in January 2021.
- Leaders use one unregistered alternative provider for a very small number of pupils.
- 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 graded 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector also met remotely with members of the board of trustees, including the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, geography, music, business studies and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils and students about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' and students' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and students from Years 7 to 13 about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding and scrutinised the single central record. Inspectors considered leaders' safeguarding processes and procedures. Inspectors discussed safeguarding with pupils, students and staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff, pupils and students.

Inspection team

Ben Hill, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Rebecca Sharples	His Majesty's Inspector
David Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector
Elaine Mawson	His Majesty's Inspector

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