

Inspection of Wilmington Grammar School for Girls

Wilmington Grange, Parsons Lane, Wilmington, Dartford, Kent DA2 7BB

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are extremely proud of their school. They love being part of a community which promotes diversity and equality. Strong, positive, professional relationships between pupils and staff lie at the centre of the school's ethos. Pupils model the school's 'REACH' values of respect and resilience, equality, achievement, community, honesty and integrity, throughout the school day. Behaviour is excellent. Bullying is very rare, but pupils are rightly confident that leaders would act quickly to stop any that did happen.

Pupils are articulate and passionate about the world that they live in. They benefit from numerous opportunities to develop their leadership skills and to share their opinions, especially through the superbly organised student council. Pupils participate in a wide range of clubs and visits. The 'virtual visit' to China was especially popular, as are the preparations for a production of the musical 'Matilda'. Sixth-form students enjoy meeting new friends when they participate in a range of additional academic, voluntary and sporting activities, known as 'electives'.

Pupils achieve very well in most subjects. Leaders have raised their expectations of the quality of curriculum and teaching. Leaders are well on their way to achieving their vision for a high-quality education across the whole school.

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

Since the arrival of the current headteacher in 2019, leaders and staff have focused sharply on improving the school, because there had been some previous decline. Their dedication to making sure that pupils achieve as highly as possible is starting to pay off, as seen by the strong set of GCSE results pupils achieved this year.

The overall curriculum that pupils study is broad and rich. Right from when pupils join the school in Year 7, they are thirsty for knowledge. The 'Epistemic Insight' programme that sits alongside other subjects, promotes pupils' enquiry skills. Through this, pupils learn to link together the knowledge they gain from other subjects. From Year 8, pupils benefit from learning two languages. At key stage 4, nearly all pupils study subjects that are part of the English Baccalaureate. Increasing numbers of pupils now study three science qualifications. In addition, there is a variety of other subjects to select from, including for pupils who wish to follow a technical curriculum after their GCSEs. In the sixth form, students choose from a wide range of subjects that allow them to progress on to high quality next stages.

Typically, subjects have ambitious aims and are well sequenced. Teachers are passionate and knowledgeable about their subjects. As a result, most teaching is well organised and ensures that pupils' knowledge becomes increasingly complex and deep over time. Adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) help pupils to achieve on a par with others. Leaders are ironing out the organisation in a small number of subjects, including in the sixth form, to

ensure consistent high quality throughout the school. A strong programme of professional development is underway which supports subject leaders and teachers in this drive for excellence.

Reading is strongly prioritised. A few pupils who need extra help with comprehension and learning key vocabulary get tailored support. Most pupils read voraciously and delight in sharing their thoughts on their favourite books with each other.

Careers information, education, advice and guidance is extremely well organised. From when they start in Year 7, pupils start to consider the range of careers they might choose. Pupils receive tailored advice that helps inform their choices as they get older. Pupils with SEND get additional help and support in deciding their next stages. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. Consequently, pupils are well informed about their options for the future, including what technical education and apprenticeships are available in the local area.

Leaders and staff provide an excellent range of opportunities for pupils to learn about the world around them. Pupils are passionate about living positive, purposeful lives. Pupils told us that their respect for each other 'comes from the school.' For example, leaders provide numerous activities where pupils celebrate the diverse communities and cultures which make up the school. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is valued by pupils because it helps them to understand themselves. Relationships education and support for pupils' mental health play a key part of the education pupils prize. Parents praise the school for its approach to 'developing the whole child.'

Trustees' and governors' support and challenge play an integral part in the school's overall success. Those responsible for governance are rightly proud of the ethos which prioritises equality for all and pupils' personal development. Governors check that the school continues to strengthen, including by making sure that staff's well-being and workloads are carefully considered.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are well trained in safeguarding. They are alert to the risks that pupils face. Staff know how to report concerns about pupils' safety and do so promptly. Leaders liaise well with external partners to get pupils who need it extra help. This includes strong communication with the local boys' school about safeguarding in the post-16 provision.

Pupils are well informed about how to keep safe, including in the community and online. Pupils are rightly confident that adults will listen and help them if they need it.

Leaders and those responsible for governance follow safer recruitment procedures.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small minority of subjects, including in the sixth form, the sequencing and progression of the curriculum is not as coherent as it could be and there is some inconsistency in teachers' practice. As a result, some pupils do not learn as much as they could. Senior leaders should ensure that they continue to support subject leaders to develop well-sequenced curriculums with clearly identified components that lead to ambitious end points, along with ensuring that teachers benefit from a strong quality of continuous, professional development. This will enable staff to raise their expectations for pupils' learning still further.

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	137250
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10240537
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,072
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	240
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Suki Mattu
Principal	Michelle Lawson
Website	http://www.gsgw.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 October 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2019. The deputy headteacher joined in September 2022.
- The school uses one registered and one unregistered provider of alternative provision.
- The school shares post-16 provision, known as 'WG6', with the local boys' grammar school. Pupils attend lessons at this school's site and at Common Lane, Wilmington, Dartford DA2 7DA.
- 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 second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued 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 senior leadership team. The lead inspector also met with trustees, the chief executive officer of the trust and some members of the local board of governors.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives of the alternative provisions that some pupils attend.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: history, geography, science, mathematics, design and technology 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 looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects and the school's approach to reading.
- Inspectors also met with leaders and staff about provision for personal development, behaviour and attitudes and for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors met with safeguarding leaders, governors, trustees, staff and pupils to understand how well the school keeps its pupils safe. They also inspected the school's single central record of employment checks and looked at records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors met with some early career teachers.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and free-text comments. Leaders considered the views of pupils shared in the confidential pupil survey and through discussions with pupils throughout the school.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Nicky Archer	Ofsted Inspector
Rupert Prutton	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Ellison	His Majesty's Inspector

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