

# Inspection of Woolwich Polytechnic School for Girls

1 Birchdene Drive, Thamesmead, London SE28 8RF

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Inspection dates: 10 and 11 January 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

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

Pupils are articulate and interested in their learning. The school provides pupils with a welcoming learning environment. Leaders think carefully about the needs of individuals. They make sure that all pupils learn a broad and ambitious curriculum. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Leaders have high expectations of behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibility and hold leadership positions in the school. The school is safe and well ordered, meaning that, typically, little learning time is lost. Teachers respond firmly and supportively when behaviour incidents occur, including bullying. Nevertheless, some pupils and families would like more reassurance that appropriate action is taken when they raise worries. Leaders are taking these views seriously. They are working constructively with pupils and parents and carers to increase their confidence in how effectively concerns are managed.

Pupils are taught to respect all in the diverse school community. Staff think carefully about how to meet needs and keep pupils safe, both inside and outside the school. For example, at the end of the day, staff are on hand to help pupils to make their way home safely.

Staff are knowledgeable and well trained. They are very proud of their pupils and continually work to provide wider enrichment opportunities for all, including careers guidance.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all their pupils. They have considered carefully what pupils need to know and how to teach pupils to remember and apply knowledge in a subject. For example, in English, pupils read a range of carefully selected texts. Through this, they explore and link together different themes, such as how women are represented in different genres of literature.

Pupils achieve well. Every pupil learns a broad curriculum in Years 7 to 9. From Year 10, pupils choose from a broad range of academic and vocational subjects. Leaders have credible plans to increase the proportion of pupils taking the English Baccalaureate qualification.

Teachers ensure that they deliver learning in a way that enables pupils to understand new ideas and knowledge. Pupils like the way that their teachers help them to get better in a subject. Leaders and teachers think deeply about how to build up pupils' understanding in a logical way. In many cases, this means that they check pupils' understanding effectively before teaching moves on to new ideas or concepts. However, this is not consistently the case across all subjects and year groups.

Leaders ensure that teachers have a clear understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND. They plan effectively for these pupils to receive relevant support, including individual extra help. As a result, pupils with SEND successfully access the same curriculum as others.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to develop a love of reading. They provide 'reading for pleasure' lessons and have a popular library. They also identify and support those pupils who need additional help to develop fluency in reading.

Leaders aim to foster a strong sense of community in the school and ensure that pupils feel well supported. Pupils are routinely encouraged to contribute to the wider life of the school through taking on leadership roles, for example through 'Founders' or in the 'PolyParliament'. Pupils also readily celebrate their diverse community, for instance by taking part in events such as International Day of Culture.

Leaders have a good knowledge of the pupils in their care. The programme for pastoral education is well designed to meet pupils' needs and experiences. Pupils learn about themes and issues that are designed to increase their resilience and develop their understanding of local and national issues. Pupils also receive an ambitious careers programme that includes work experience. They have access to a range of wider opportunities such as music, sport and art.

Pupils attend well. Leaders have put in place a clear system of rewards and sanctions. They deal effectively with any incidents of poor behaviour, including bullying. Despite leaders' work to promote a positive school ethos, some pupils feel that sanctions are not applied fairly. Others expressed concerns about how staff would respond to issues if they were to report them, including any worries about bullying. Leaders are working with pupils and parents to develop a culture of trust and to provide reassurance. For example, leaders ensure that pupils see their form tutor twice a day to ensure that pupils have a trusted adult available who knows them well.

Teachers are well supported and enjoy working at the school. They said that their workload is manageable.

Trustees and governors know the school well and support and challenge leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive effective training to ensure that they are aware of possible risks to pupils. Consequently, staff are vigilant and report concerns at the right time and to the right people. Leaders have put systems in place to ensure that all pupils have someone to talk to. They have also introduced systems to ensure that pupils can report concerns anonymously if they wish to. The personal development curriculum is well designed to ensure that pupils learn about how to stay safe.

Leaders carry out the required checks to ensure that they employ suitable staff. They keep records and make referrals to external agencies when this is appropriate. The school has a range of additional pastoral approaches to support pupils, such as counselling and a therapy dog.

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

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

- In some cases, teachers do not check pupils' understanding effectively and use this to make necessary adaptations to learning. This affects how well pupils are able to remember and apply key knowledge over time. Leaders need to continue their work to improve staff's expertise in checking pupils' learning and addressing misconceptions and gaps in knowledge.
- Some pupils see the school as strict rather than supportive and feel that sanctions are unfair. At times, this can lead to these pupils becoming disaffected with school. Leaders need to build on their current work to foster a positive learning environment, including ensuring that pupils understand how and why rewards and sanctions are applied.
- A minority of pupils are not confident that staff will help them if they raise concerns. This makes them reluctant to report these, for instance around bullying. Leaders need to continue their work to ensure that pupils feel confident about reporting concerns in the right way and to reassure them that such concerns are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	143686
<b>Local authority</b>	Greenwich
<b>Inspection number</b>	10257100
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	943
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Holly Broughton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lizaan Williams
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.woolwichpolygirls.co.uk">www.woolwichpolygirls.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2019. It is now in its fourth year and has pupils in Years 7 to 10. It will become full in September 2023. This means that substantial numbers of new staff have joined each year since 2019.
- A new headteacher started in September 2021.
- Leaders make use of one alternative provision, which is registered as a school.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement 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 met with senior leaders, governors and trustees, subject leaders and groups of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in computing, design technology, English, French and science. Each deep dive involved discussing the curriculum with subject leaders, visiting lessons, reviewing pupils’ work and speaking with teachers and pupils from the lessons that inspectors visited. Other subjects were also considered as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors spoke to subject leaders in some curriculum areas about training and support. They also spoke to senior leaders about how the curriculum is being developed.
- Inspectors held meeting with leaders responsible for the school’s safeguarding arrangements. They also looked at safeguarding records, including pre-employment checks for staff.
- Inspectors spoke to staff who lead behaviour and personal development. They also reviewed a range of documentation in these areas.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about their well-being and workload. They considered staff responses to Ofsted’s online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils from different year groups. They considered pupils’ responses to the online pupil survey. Inspectors also considered responses to the online parent survey, Ofsted Parent View.

### **Inspection team**

Alice Clay, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Hannah Glossop	His Majesty’s Inspector
Rebecca Iles-Smith	His Majesty’s Inspector
Dr Ogugua Okolo-Angus	Ofsted Inspector
Umbar Sharif	Ofsted Inspector

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