

Inspection of a good school: Wilmington Grammar School for Boys

Common Lane, Wilmington, Dartford, Kent DA2 7DA

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 March 2023

Outcome

Wilmington Grammar School for Boys continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils greatly enjoy attending Wilmington Grammar School for Boys. It is a warm, friendly and aspirational school, and pupils feel happy and safe here. Pupils recognise, understand and value each other's differences. Any incidents of bullying are resolved quickly by staff.

Pupils understand the high expectations leaders have of them. Staff guide them very well to live up to these through the school's shared 'PRIDE' values of personal excellence, respect, innovation, determination and equality. These high expectations help all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve well.

Pupils behave in an exemplary manner. In lessons, they are eager to learn. At social times, they enjoy happily chatting together, often in mixed year groups.

There is a huge variety of extra-curricular activities and leadership opportunities for pupils to enjoy. For instance, they can become form captains, prefects and members of the equality and diversity group. Pupils are able to participate in a wide range of music and sports activities or join the 'Formula 1' club. Large numbers take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Sixth-form students enjoy volunteering and supporting younger pupils with their learning.

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

The headteacher, governors and trust leaders have a clear vision for the school. Trustees hold leaders to account rigorously. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is supported by a very talented group of senior leaders. Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate how well leaders consider their well-being and workload. Staff at all levels feel supported and valued, including those in the early stages of their careers.

Leaders have ensured that all pupils, including students in the sixth form, study a broad and ambitious range of subjects. For example, during key stage 3, all pupils study two foreign languages. At key stage 4, increasing numbers of pupils follow the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects and study the separate sciences. Sixth-form students can choose to study from a range of interesting subjects, such as construction, law and economics. Pupils with SEND follow the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. As a result, pupils achieve the qualifications they need to progress on to their next steps. Many gain places on high-quality apprenticeships and at prestigious universities.

Teachers, including those who teach in the sixth form, are experts in their fields. This has enabled them to pinpoint the essential knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn in each subject. Leaders have thought carefully about the order in which pupils learn new knowledge and skills, supporting them to build securely on what they already know. Many teachers deliver the curriculum very effectively. They are skilled in selecting activities that help most pupils to understand new learning readily.

In lessons, pupils are keen to learn and set to work quickly. They enjoy working together collaboratively. However, some pupils do not grasp key knowledge the first time around. Sometimes, teachers do not pick up on this and move on to new learning too quickly, without checking that key knowledge has been learned. This hinders some pupils' progress, particularly pupils with SEND. However, leaders do identify the needs of pupils with SEND well. These pupils are highly motivated to succeed and benefit from strong pastoral support. One parent wrote: 'The SEND department has gone above and beyond to ensure that my son is supported, such as providing counselling.'

Most pupils are fluent readers. Leaders ensure that those who need extra help receive it. Pupils are encouraged to develop a love of reading. They read during library lessons and during form time. The library is a thriving and popular part of the school.

Leaders place high value on developing pupils' character and their understanding of the world around them. They have implemented their very well-designed 'LIFE' programme effectively. This teaches pupils how to stay safe and look after their health and well-being. The curriculum is readily adapted to respond to issues that arise locally or nationally. Pupils regularly enjoy debating current affairs topics, such as the role of the monarchy. Careers education is superbly organised and includes work experience and careers fairs. Consequently, pupils develop into well-rounded individuals who are very well prepared for their next steps. As one parent said, 'My child is receiving an awe-inspiring education from Wilmington, and we are very happy with it.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Leaders ensure that staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training. Staff are clear about how to spot the

signs that pupils may be at risk of harm in or outside school. Staff are vigilant and report concerns quickly. Leaders make sure that they respond to any concerns promptly.

Pupils learn about risks to their personal safety, such as online, and how to recognise and avoid them. Leaders quickly identify whether pupils require additional outside support. They work with a range of outside agencies to ensure that pupils get the help they need. Governors receive regular updates on leaders' oversight of safeguarding issues.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, teachers move on to new learning without fully checking that all pupils have understood key concepts. This means that some pupils, particularly those with SEND, do not secure the depth of knowledge that they could. Leaders should ensure that teachers check that all pupils, especially those with SEND, have grasped new knowledge securely so that pupils know and remember more of the intended 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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 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.

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	137227
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256434
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	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,078
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	237
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Suki Mattu
Headteacher	Stuart Harrington
Website	www.wgsb.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Endeavour MAT
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2021. The deputy headteacher was appointed in 2020.
- The school uses one registered provider of alternative provision.
- The school shares post-16 provision, known as 'WG6', with the local girls' grammar school. Pupils attend lessons at this school's site and at Parsons Lane, Wilmington, Dartford DA2 7BB.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector also met with trustees, the chief executive officer of the trust and some members of the local board of governors.
- An inspector held a telephone discussion with a member of staff at one alternative provider.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, geography, science and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- Through discussions with leaders, governors, trustees, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. They also viewed the school website and policies. Inspectors looked at records related to safeguarding, including checks on adults working at the school.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including early career teachers, about behaviour and their workload in school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including free-text comments. Inspectors considered the views of pupils shared in the confidential pupil survey and through discussions held with pupils throughout the school.

Inspection team

Paula Sargent, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Tom Neave

Ofsted Inspector

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