

# Inspection of a good school: Simon Langton Girls' Grammar School

Old Dover Road, Canterbury, Kent CT1 3EW

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Inspection dates:

26 and 27 September 2023

## Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

There is an exceptionally strong sense of community and connection evident at Simon Langton Girls' Grammar. Pupils of all ages understand the roles they play in contributing to a happy and successful school. They are tolerant, inclusive and celebrate difference. Sixth-form students talk positively about being role models for younger pupils, as 'Head Students', 'Prefects' and 'Form Guardians'. Students value these opportunities, not just because they allow them to work with and support younger members of their community, but because they remember looking up to these figures themselves, when they began their school careers. These embedded structures and relationships typify the school culture here, and are as a result of strong modelling by staff. Behaviour in the school is especially calm and settled as a result of these strong relationships across the school. At social times, pupils mix well and conduct themselves calmly.

The school has high expectations for all its pupils, both in terms of what they can achieve academically but also in developing their wider selves and what they can then contribute to the world beyond school. Pupils have a significant voice here, and they are empowered to establish groups, societies and clubs that hold their interests.

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

The school has constructed an ambitious curriculum that builds in demand as pupils move up the school. The school has thought carefully about the specific points of knowledge and skills, and how these connect and build over time to develop a rich body of learning. Curriculum plans are fully inclusive of all pupils, including those with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers know well how to adapt their approach to support pupils with additional needs, both in classrooms and in the 'Learning Base', a hub that further supports pupils with SEND to access the support and help they need to thrive.

The ambitious curriculum planning is brought to life successfully in the classroom. Staff have strong, expert subject knowledge, giving clear explanations that not only support learning but also enthuse and engage pupils about their subjects. Staff are adept at asking questions to check pupils' understanding. They also use questioning expertly to ensure that pupils think hard about their learning. As a result, pupils routinely think deeply and challenge themselves. In lessons, behaviour is very strong. Pupils engage readily, lessons are focused, and learning is rarely disrupted.

Pupils achieve very well in this school. This is evident in published end of key stage outcomes, but also in terms of the high-quality work pupils produce. Pupils can talk confidently and articulately about what they have studied, connecting things they have learned previously to what they are learning now. Some of this is because teachers regularly make the intended connections in their learning journeys explicit, but much of this comes from the pupils themselves. Pupils replicate what staff have modelled for them consistently over time.

There is an exceptionally strong and varied range of activities to support the wider development of pupils. Through the school's 'super-curricular' offer, including the IVE (Intellectual Vision and Endeavour) programme, the school has carefully mapped out pathways to an increasing variety of different career arenas, beginning from Year 8 and moving up through the sixth form. This includes areas such as MDV (medical, dental, veterinary), legal and philosophical. Across these areas, leaders have constructed a range of meaningful opportunities for pupils to explore and develop interest in different fields. Pupils can elect to attend any number of these pathways, engaging in discussion, hearing visiting speakers and lecturers, and undertaking their own research projects. For example, pupils have undertaken research on topics such as biodiversity, or those that form part of 'The Mind Lab', the school's own centre for psychological research.

The school offers an outstanding range of wider cultural experiences, such as extensive music and drama opportunities including orchestras and chamber ensembles. As part of the 'Langton Language Centre', in addition to the modern foreign languages pupils can study as part of the curriculum, pupils can access courses including Mandarin, Korean, Russian and Japanese. Pupils also recently celebrated world cultural day, during which a number of international embassies visited the school to explore a diverse range of cultures.

Leaders in the school are careful and considered in their approach. They consult staff, pupils and parents and carers effectively, meaning that any changes are implemented well and with strong buy-in from those affected by them. Leaders are reflective, and consider their actions to ensure they have the impact they intend. Leaders create a culture where staff feel valued and supported. They encourage trying new ideas and support staff in ensuring that their workload and well-being are regularly considered.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## 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 July 2014.

## 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118840
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10287928
<b>Type of school</b>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<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>	1,251
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	305
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Mike Albury
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Pollard
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.langton.kent.sch.uk">www.langton.kent.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 April 2018 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- There have been a number of changes to school staff since the last inspection, including the headteacher.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector met with the members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, modern foreign languages and textiles. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also looked at curriculum planning from across a number of other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspection team took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and governor minutes. The team also took account of external reports of the school, including those from the local authority.
- The team spoke with pupils about their experience of the school. The team took account of parent and carer and staff views through conversations and responses to Ofsted's surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Marian Feeley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Steve Baker

Ofsted Inspector

Jason Philipsz

Ofsted Inspector

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