

Inspection of an outstanding school: Tolworth Girls' School and Sixth Form

Tala Close, Tolworth Girls' School and Sixth Form, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 7EY

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 September 2023

Outcome

Tolworth Girls' School and Sixth Form continues to be an outstanding school.

The headteacher of this school is Jolande Botha-Smith. This school is part of Tolworth Girls' School and Sixth Form Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Perks.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being part of this school community. Pupils' welfare and specific needs are looked after with the utmost care. Leaders are committed to being mindful of pupils' mental health, with the school taking on a lead role in a cluster of schools in the support of pupils' emotional well-being.

The school has high ambitions for its pupils, and pupils aspire to meet these. For example, pupils express complex ideas through well-written extended pieces of work. These ambitions extend to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), whose needs are well considered and provided for.

The school has an exceptional personal development programme in place. A wide range of extra-curricular activities are on offer, such as drone club and trips that boost pupils' cultural understanding. The school has embedded a programme that presents key issues to pupils as they are growing up, known as the 'Tolworth Way'.

The school has established high expectations for pupils' behaviour, which teachers uphold fairly and consistently. Pupils understand the value of meeting these expectations, and classrooms are a calm learning environment. Leaders are sharply attuned to bullying risks, and when any rare incidents are reported, these are dealt with effectively.

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

The school has a consistently ambitious curriculum across subjects. Leaders and staff expect pupils to achieve well, and pupils live up to these expectations. This is evident in the progress pupils have made by the time they take their GCSEs.

Teachers are highly effective in making sure that pupils can access learning. They adapt their teaching to ensure that pupils with SEND make strong progress. The school goes to great efforts to ensure that pupils' needs are identified accurately and with precision. Once identified, the school rapidly provides support for these pupils, which is closely matched to their specific needs. Pupils attending the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision) also receive this carefully crafted curriculum offer. For example, some pupils are given additional lessons on developing their social skills and interactions and managing their time, to develop good study habits.

These strengths in delivering the curriculum extend to the sixth form and across the range of subjects on offer. This is because teachers have strong subject knowledge, which is further extended through the many opportunities for professional development. Leaders are clear that this is how they build capacity over time.

The school has developed a clear culture of reading for pleasure. Teachers swiftly identify any pupils needing support with their reading. They set out precisely what these pupils require. This results in pupils building up their reading skills, vocabulary and fluency with confidence. Pupils can produce complex pieces of extended writing on a diverse range of subject matters. For example, teachers worked alongside a local university to identify challenging texts and enable pupils to consider mature topics such as body positivity, diversity and privilege.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The atmosphere in classrooms is purposeful and calm, and pupils value the opportunity to learn. Leaders have established positive routines, and pupils appreciate the consistency and fairness with which teachers manage behaviour. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They fully understand the value of self-regulating their conduct and appreciate the respectful way in which teachers interact with them. Teachers do this in line with the schools' ethos and values, consistently encouraging all to 'be the best you can be.'

Leaders and teachers place an emphasis on developing pupils' character. The school has a clear focus on boosting self-esteem and confidence. Pupils have access to a range of activities and additional services to support their happiness and well-being. Leaders make this a clear priority. They are considerate of sensitive issues and ensure that important topics such as healthy living and online safety are understood well by pupils. As a consequence, pupils are extremely respectful of those different from themselves and embrace the diversity of the school population.

Pupils, including those in the sixth form, receive a wealth of guidance and advice on the next steps in their education. The school partners with external organisations to offer broad exposure to careers and to nurture pupils' interests. This is supplemented with a

rich offer of extra-curricular activities, including a choir, sustainability crafts, theatre productions and training as ball girls for the Wimbledon tennis championship.

Leaders make sure that the well-being of teachers is prioritised, with a culture of open feedback and healthy challenge that leads to constant incremental improvements. Leaders make decisions in conjunction with staff and consistently in the interest of pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in September 2017.

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

Unique reference number	137060
Local authority	Kingston upon Thames
Inspection number	10290175
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
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	1,431
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	310
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Perks
Headteacher	Jolande Botha-Smith
Website	http://www.tolworthgirlsschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 September 2017

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up her post in January 2023.
- This school is part of the Tolworth Girls' School and Sixth Form Trust.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for eight pupils with SEND, specifically autism spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider for additional tuition.
- 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and trust support staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, languages and information technology. 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. Inspectors also considered other subjects as part of the inspection.
- 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.
- Inspectors had formal meetings with staff and with pupils. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also considered responses to the staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors met with pupils in the sixth form, spoke to leaders about the provision for pupils with SEND, and visited the specially resourced provision on site.

Inspection team

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