

Inspection of Westcliff High School for Girls

Kenilworth Gardens, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex SS0 0BS

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 February 2024

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Emma Matthews. This school is part of the South East Essex Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Andrew Cooper and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Neal Misell.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Westcliff High School for Girls under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Westcliff High School for Girls to be outstanding, before it opened as Westcliff High School for Girls as a result of conversion to academy status.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' exemplary behaviour and positive attitudes to learning reflect leaders' high expectations. They show respect for each other and for staff. The welcome given to visitors, including in pupils' willingness to share their learning, is impressive. Should any pupil, on rare occasions, need support to improve their behaviour, the school is quick to provide it.

New pupils settle in quickly. Pupils in Year 7 speak with pride and excitement about their school. Students who join in the sixth form rapidly develop a sense of belonging. They are confident and well-integrated into the school's community. Pupils learn to stay safe and to make safe choices. They are safe in school.

Pupils are very well prepared for life beyond the school. The curriculum includes important preparation for their next stages in education, employment and/or training. This high-quality support sets pupils and students up extremely well as they move on at the end of Year 11 or Year 13.

The vast array of lunchtime clubs and extra-curricular activities has something for everyone. Many pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Others enjoy, for example, debating, engineering and knitting clubs. Pupils and sixth-form students routinely make a significant contribution to school life acting as role models and leaders.

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

High aspirations and a deep-rooted ambition for pupils to excel are embedded throughout the school. The provision extends way beyond the national curriculum and examination expectations. Pupils access a wide range of subjects across year groups, including in the sixth form.

The school and the trust has reviewed, refreshed and redesigned the curriculum. Across subjects, learning is sequenced in a logical order. Important 'golden threads' of knowledge are revisited regularly. Therefore, new content builds securely on what pupils and students already know. As a result, they remember the things they are taught and can apply them in different situations. Pupils enjoy opportunities to discuss and debate each other's viewpoint. Teachers ask probing questions to deepen learning. Regular checks ensure that any gaps in pupils' understanding are resolved quickly. Pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.

Consistently well-planned programmes capture pupils' interests and enthusiasm. Pupils and students in the sixth form achieve very well. Teachers work closely with the school's special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). They make effective adaptations to lessons and provide thoughtful individual support. Consequently,

pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) routinely achieve as well as others.

Pupils and students are encouraged to read widely for pleasure and to enhance their subject-based studies. The school's impressive library is well used. The exceptionally wide range of books covers many different themes. For example, equality, diversity and celebrating individual differences. Pupils use the helpful subject-specific book lists to broaden their reading beyond the classroom.

High standards of behaviour are evident in lessons and at social times. The very rare cases where pupils' behaviour falls short of expectations are managed well. Attitudes to learning are exemplary. Attendance rates are high. Pupils are highly motivated and almost exclusively display positive attitudes. They work hard and contribute well to the school community.

The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum is carefully planned. Themed assemblies support taught sessions and tutorials, for example, through topics linked to inclusion and equality. Pupils and sixth-form students confidently lead assemblies. They value the school's diversity. In their words, 'Everyone is included.'

Pupils have clear aspirations for the future. They are well supported to achieve their ambitious aims. All year groups take part in a well-considered programme of careers education. Regular visiting speakers offer insights into business, industry and higher education. Many students progress to university and other appropriate routes such as higher-level apprenticeships.

Pupils' wider development is well catered for. This includes through the extensive opportunities for leadership roles. Pupils with SEND take on similar responsibilities to their peers. Sixth-form students and younger pupils run lunchtime clubs. Those studying engineering in Year 11 and Year 12, for example, inspire others when speaking about the student-built racing car. They also lead various clubs linked to science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Staff continue to improve their practice through effective training opportunities. This focus on continuous improvement is well established at all levels. The trust, local governing body and school leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of education. They are considerate of staff workload when making changes. Parents value the positive relationships that exist. The strategies to share information about the school's work are checked regularly to ensure that they are effective.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	136490
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10267883
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	1333
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	457
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Neal Misell
Headteacher	Emma Matthews
Website	www.whsg.info
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened in March 2011.
- It is part of the South East Essex Academy Trust (SEEAT).
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2022.
- The school's curriculum has undergone significant changes in recent years, including the development of a three-year programme, to replace the previous two-year offer at key stage 3.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- 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.

- 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 inspectors conducted deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, biology, business studies, performing arts and history. To complete each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, and spoke with teachers. They also spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- A wider sample of curriculum plans were considered beyond the deep dives, including geography, art, computer science, engineering and modern foreign languages.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors looked at safeguarding policies, the school's record of pre-employment checks on new staff and a sample of child protection files. They 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.
- Meetings were held with headteacher and other leaders, including the SENCO, leaders with oversight of pupils' PSHE provision, behaviour, attendance and careers education.
- A range of documents were scrutinised, including behaviour logs, attendance records, minutes of governors' meetings, school improvement plans and school policies.
- There were 167 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, which were considered alongside 164 free-text responses from parents.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views through informal discussions and meetings with them during the inspection. They also took account of 527 responses to the Ofsted pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered the 71 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire. They also spoke with groups of staff to hear their views.

Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Sutton	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Robins	Ofsted Inspector
Sharon Pritchard	Ofsted Inspector
Aimee Bray	Ofsted Inspector

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