

Inspection of a good school: Woolwich Polytechnic School

Hutchins Road, Thamesmead, London SE28 8AT

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 March 2024

Outcome

Woolwich Polytechnic School continues to be a good school.

The head of school is Tom Lawrence. This school is part of PolyMAT multi-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, Tim Plumb, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sylvia Perrins.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a large, diverse school where difference is valued. Leaders have set high expectations, which is reflected in their vision for 'success for everyone'. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, build positive relationships with each other and with staff. Pupils know that staff care about them and will help them. Bullying is not tolerated, and staff are vigilant. This helps to ensure that pupils feel safe and are kept safe.

Pupils behave well in lessons. However, there are some incidents of disruptive behaviour in corridors and social spaces. Pupils understand that this behaviour is unacceptable and report their concerns to staff. The rules set by the school are clear, supportive and fair. Pupils understand the system of rewards that is in place, which motivates them to improve their conduct.

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, value their extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils are encouraged to take on leadership responsibilities, such as being representatives on the school council and acting as prefects.

Students in the sixth form enjoy their courses. They feel supported by teachers who know them well. Students value the advice and guidance they receive about careers and their next steps. They feel well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. Pupils can choose from a wide range of academic and vocational subjects in key stage 4. The take-up of some subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate is low. Leaders are aware of this and are taking action to improve the proportion of pupils, for example, who choose to study a language.

The curriculum is well sequenced. Pupils learn fundamental concepts before building on what they already know and deepen their knowledge and understanding. For example, in mathematics, pupils learn about directed numbers before learning how to apply this knowledge using algebra. Similarly, in art, pupils develop subject-specific vocabulary to talk about the work of different contemporary and classical artists. This supports them to plan, design, produce and evaluate pieces of art. The curriculum is enriched through visits, for example to the Tate Modern and the National Gallery. Pupils take pride in their work and talk enthusiastically about what they are learning, making links with what they have learned previously.

Assessment is used effectively to check what pupils have learned and to guide them in making improvements to their work. Teachers use questioning well and encourage pupils, and students in the sixth form, to engage in discussion and debate. Pupils benefit from teachers' strong subject knowledge. This is a result of the comprehensive professional development offered by the school.

In a few subjects, however, the curriculum is not implemented as leaders intend. Some pupils do not receive the support they need in a timely way. This results in these pupils not achieving as well as they could. Leaders have recognised this and are taking appropriate action to address the issue.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are accurately identified. Teachers generally make careful adaptations to tasks and activities so that pupils can access the same curriculum as their peers, where this is possible. Pupils who attend the additionally resourced provision are very well supported by specialist staff. The school ensures that all pupils read regularly and have access to a well-stocked library. This helps them to develop their vocabulary and a love of reading. Pupils who cannot read well enough get the support they need to catch up.

Most pupils attend school well and systems for improving this further are well established. There is support in place to help those pupils who struggle to attend. Most pupils behave well, listen attentively and show respect for each other in lessons. However, a small minority of pupils' behaviour in the corridors and in the playground is less strong. Leaders recognise this and have implemented strategies to encourage and reward positive behaviour.

A structured careers programme supports pupils to prepare for adult life. Pupils receive the information they need to make pathway choices. The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is effective. Pupils are provided with strong pastoral support. Pupils understand about healthy relationships and how to stay safe online. There are a range of

extra-curricular activities in which pupils can participate, such as chess, coding and competitive sports clubs.

The school is well led. Staff, including early career teachers, feel that their workload and well-being have been carefully considered by leaders. They value the opportunities provided to improve their professional practice. Governors and trustees are knowledgeable about the school. They provide effective challenge and support to school leaders, for example through regular monitoring visits.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The behaviour policy is not implemented consistently beyond the classroom. As a result, a minority of pupils' disruptive behaviour in corridors and social spaces does not reflect leaders' expectations. The school should ensure that the behaviour policy is applied consistently in all areas of the school to help pupils manage their behaviour outside of the classroom.
- In a few subjects, some pupils do not receive the support they need in a timely way. This results in these pupils not achieving as well as they could. The school should ensure that staff receive the support they need to implement the curriculum to match the intended ambition.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2019.

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

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| Unique reference number | 141163 |
| Local authority | Greenwich |
| Inspection number | 10313900 |
| Type of school | Secondary Comprehensive |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Boys |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,584 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 389 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Sylvia Perrins |
| CEO of the trust | Tim Plumb |
| Headteacher | Tom Lawrence (head of school) |
| Website | http://woolwichpoly.co.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 30 and 31 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The CEO of the PolyMAT multi-academy trust is responsible for two other schools.
- There is a specially resourced provision for 15 pupils with SEND, specifically autism and moderate learning difficulties.
- The school makes use of three registered alternative providers.
- 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 completed deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, art and geography. To do this, they met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited lessons, had discussions with staff and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. Other subjects were also considered as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- 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 held meetings with staff and with pupils. Behaviour was observed both in lessons and around the school. The views of pupils, staff, parents and carers were considered through discussions and looking at information collected from Ofsted's surveys.
- Inspectors met with pupils in the sixth form, spoke with leaders about the provision for pupils with SEND, and visited the specially resourced provision on site.
- Inspectors met with a representative from the local governing body. They also held discussions with the chair of the trust board.

Inspection team

Robert Grice, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jennifer Bax

Ofsted Inspector

Brian Oppenheim

His Majesty's Inspector

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