

Inspection of Wycombe High School

Marlow Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP11 1TB

Inspection dates: 30 April and 1 May 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

Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Mrs Nicola Renyard. This school is part of the Wycombe High School Academies 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 Mr David Garmon-Jones.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since June 2012.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Wycombe High School (WHS), pupils achieve academic excellence and contribute eagerly to all aspects of school life. Interactions between pupils and staff are defined by a sense of community and mutual respect. Pupils live out the school's values of 'limitless ambition, infectious joy, insatiable curiosity and generous spirit'. There is a high level of trust between staff and pupils which contributes to a positive school-wide culture where pupils feel safe.

The school has set very high expectations for pupils' achievement and their wider development. As a selective school, pupils join with high prior attainment. However, staff and pupils are not complacent about what more can be achieved. Pupils work incredibly hard, and staff focus relentlessly on helping pupils meet their shared high expectations. Consequently, pupils, including those in the sixth form, achieve highly.

Pupils benefit from an exceptional enrichment offer. The school provides numerous, varied opportunities to nurture, develop, and stretch pupils' talents and interests. Pupils speak highly of these and make good use of them. They often take the lead in establishing new clubs and societies. This enables them to be instrumental in creating the diverse and inclusive community that they are rightly proud to be a part of.

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

Leaders have designed a highly ambitious and rigorous curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). An exceptionally high proportion of pupils study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. The curriculum has been carefully designed and logically sequenced across subjects, allowing pupils to build precisely on what they already know. When pupils with SEND join the school, their needs are identified accurately. This helps teachers to meet their needs successfully. Pupils who need additional help to improve their reading are supported effectively. As a result, pupils achieve exceptional academic success, including in external examinations, across a broad range of curriculum subjects at the end of Years 11 and 13.

Teachers are experts in their subjects. Across the range of subjects, they present new subject matter clearly and effectively. Consistent use of 'recall' activities at the start of lessons helps pupils remember and build on prior learning. Teachers use questioning successfully to check what pupils know. Staff are alert to the stumbling blocks and misconceptions that pupils may encounter and help them navigate these in order to build a deep understanding of the subject. Consequently, pupils can talk eloquently and in detail about the broad range of knowledge they have learned.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They display excellent self-control and highly positive attitudes to learning. Staff and pupils share highly respectful relationships. This creates an open and encouraging culture where everyone is equally valued.

Attendance is high. Where absence is more pronounced, for a small number of disadvantaged pupils, the school works positively with pupils and families to secure improvements.

Opportunities for pupils' broader development are exceptional. They benefit from many high-quality trips and visits, which enhance their experience of the curriculum. They engage extensively with the rich range of clubs and societies on offer. The school has constructed a thorough personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) curriculum. This teaches pupils about important issues, such as toxic masculinity, consent and the importance of sleep and eating healthily. A plethora of leadership roles enable pupils, and students in the sixth form, to contribute meaningfully to the school community. Pupils benefit from high-quality information about universities, careers and apprenticeships. Many students in the sixth form go on to successful placements at university. Others are supported onto different paths, such as degree-level apprenticeships. Whatever their chosen destination, pupils are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful.

The sixth form is a beacon of excellence. Its aspirational culture values hard work. It is equally dedicated to the personal development of students through a high quality wider curriculum that enhances and enriches their experience. This includes a well-thought-out 'futures programme' that supports students in developing relevant life skills they will need for their next stage. Consequently, students in the sixth form leave WHS as ambitious, compassionate, and well-rounded individuals.

Leaders at all levels are focused on achieving the very best for pupils. Trustees know the school well and provide highly effective support and challenge. Where there are imperfections, they evaluate them and take effective actions to bring about improvement. The school has created a culture where positive relationships are valued. Staff receive high-quality training and support. They are very positive about consideration of their workload and well-being. As a result, staff are proud to work here.

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	136723
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10296358
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	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1322
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	382
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Garmon-Jones
Headteacher	Nicola Renyard
Website	www.whs.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 June 2012

Information about this school

- The school became an academy in May 2011. The current headteacher took up their post in September 2022.
- 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

The inspector(s) 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 school's first routine inspection since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the pandemic's impact with the school and have considered that in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the board of trustees, including the chair of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: English, modern foreign languages, science, history, mathematics and religious studies. 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 met with pupils from different year groups to discuss their school experiences. This included pupils with leadership responsibilities.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 considered responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys. They also considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

James Stuart, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
James Broadbridge	His Majesty's Inspector
Julia Mortimore	Ofsted Inspector
Ginny Rhodes	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Kearsley	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Dyer	Ofsted Inspector

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