

Inspection of Weald of Kent Grammar School

Tudeley Lane, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 2JP

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Richard Booth. The school is a single-academy trust, Weald of Kent Grammar School Academy 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 Chris Eades.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils value the school's caring and nurturing ethos. They are enthusiastic about the changes the school has undergone in the last two years. At the heart of these has been a shift in the school's culture. The school has put in place a clear system of rewards and consequences, so pupils know what to expect. Behaviour is calm and settled as a result. There is a strong emphasis on pupil welfare and helping to develop confident young people. Pupils and staff interact positively with one another. This helps pupils to trust that staff will help them if they are worried, including about bullying. Pupils feel confident to alert staff to any concerns, for example by using special post boxes situated around the school.

Pupils achieve very well, as do students in the sixth form. As with all aspects of the school's provision, staff make sure that standards are consistent across the two sites. At both campuses, pupils enjoy a broad variety of extra-curricular activities. Clubs for trampolining, robotics and cooking are among the highlights of this programme. The new house system helps pupils to feel a sense of shared identity and community in the school.

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

Teachers have a detailed knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects. This enables them to provide clear and insightful explanations for pupils. The work they set challenges pupils to develop 'scholarship' by thinking deeply about their learning. This extends into the sixth form, where students are confident in deliberating complex ideas such as the causes of the mid-Tudor crisis. Teachers are adept at checking what pupils know and understand. This goes beyond simply accepting accurate responses. For example, in mathematics, pupils explain how they can prove their answers. As well as studying ambitious texts in English lessons, pupils are encouraged to read widely. The school promotes reading for pleasure, and pupils who speak English as an additional language develop their formal language strongly. Students in the sixth form benefit from high-quality suggested reading lists, which deepen their understanding.

The school makes sure that teachers know how to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Therefore, these pupils benefit from supportive strategies to access the full breadth of learning. The performance of disadvantaged pupils, including pupils with SEND, is analysed carefully by the school. Differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closing. In sixth form, students with SEND achieve exceptionally well. The school continues to refine its curriculum. Programmes of study set out a clear sequence for learning, and teachers are working to close relative gaps in pupils' understanding.

Pupils' behaviour is focused and purposeful. This contributes to effective learning in classrooms. Pupils understand the 'three Cs' behaviour system well. Consequently, there is no low-level disruption to learning. Attendance has been on an upward trend since the previous inspection. Staff work sensitively with the parents and carers of pupils who are persistently absent. This helps to remove potential barriers to good attendance. However, this work does not always bring together a full picture of the attendance issues faced by

pupils with SEND. As a result, these pupils miss out on more of the learning and support on offer in school.

The school has transformed its provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE). Lessons and assemblies address vital themes that affect pupils both online and in real life. This helps pupils to understand issues such as peer pressure and friendship dynamics. In the mixed-gender sixth form, PSHE learning builds further to explore perspectives for young men and women on issues such as coercive relationships. Pupils have extensive opportunities to discuss the moral and societal implications of these topics. The school has mapped out a new approach to careers education. Pupils find the 'career of the week' helpful and thought-provoking. However, some pupils feel that they would benefit from further guidance in making decisions about their next steps in education.

Leaders and trustees have acted strategically to move the school forward. Staff feel that changes have been made supportively, and with consideration for their workload. Improvements have been underpinned by a change in the school's ethos and culture. Staff are fully invested in this and make sure that this applies equally across both campuses. By engaging openly with pupils' and students' experiences, leaders have brought them along with this culture shift. Pupils and parents feel that they have a voice in their education and that the school listens to them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Despite the school's actions, the attendance of some groups of pupils, including pupils with SEND, remains lower than their peers. Consequently, these pupils miss out on some aspects of the learning and opportunities that the school provides, and they do not achieve as highly as they could. The school should continue to develop its strategic approach to monitoring and improving the attendance of all groups of pupils.
- Some elements of the school's programme for careers information, education advice and guidance are still in the process of being embedded. As a result, some pupils do not yet feel fully confident about making the transition to the next stage of their education. The school should ensure that pupils clearly understand all aspects of careers provision.

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	136455
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10341674
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,900
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	453
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Chris Eades
Headteacher	Richard Booth
Website	www.wealdgs.org
Date of previous inspection	9 November 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a single-academy trust, Weald of Kent Grammar School Academy Trust.
- The school operates across two sites; one in Tonbridge (Tudeley Lane, TN9 2JP), and the other in Sevenoaks (Seal Hollow Road, TN13 3SN). The majority of sixth-form students attend the Tonbridge site.
- The school currently uses two registered alternative providers and one unregistered 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 inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with school leaders, including the headteacher and deputy headteachers. The inspectors also met representatives from the board of trustees.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons across both of the school's sites, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also discussed the curriculum and provision for pupils with SEND, and sampled work from other areas of the curriculum.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, trustees, staff, parents and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts the pupils' interests first.
- As part of the inspection evidence, inspectors also considered parents' responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the responses to the online surveys for school pupils and staff.

Daniel Botting, lead inspector

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