

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Walthamstow School for Girls

Church Hill, Walthamstow, London E17 9RZ

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 December 2024

Outcome

Walthamstow School for Girls has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils receive an exceptional education. The school motto of 'neglect not the gift that is in thee' promotes a highly aspirational culture. This helps to shape pupils' character and develop them as lifelong learners. Pupils show great commitment to their learning and take pride in both their academic and creative accomplishments. These achievements are reflected in the excellent academic outcomes as well as the national awards the school has won. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do equally well. This is because teachers are skilful practitioners who make well-considered adaptations for these pupils.

The school has high expectations for pupils' learning and conduct. Pupils are polite and courteous. They understand and follow the routines in lessons, so no time is wasted. Staff and pupils share highly respectful relationships, which creates a culture where all are valued. Pupils are highly supportive of their peers and are excellent ambassadors, keen to contribute to the wider life of the school. For example, many volunteer to be part of the student senior leadership team, diversity ambassadors, reader leaders or steel drum captains.

The school provides extensive opportunities for pupils to develop their interests and talents. The arts are at the heart of the school. Pupils take up the many opportunities to participate in performances, events and competitions with enthusiasm.

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

Pupils learn an ambitious curriculum that matches, and in some cases exceeds, the scope of what is expected nationally. The curriculum for each subject is structured carefully so that the important knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils need to learn are revisited over time. This allows pupils to practise and embed their understanding systematically, so that they can tackle more complex learning. For example, in English, younger pupils identify how characters develop through the Victorian novel they study. This foundational knowledge supports older pupils to recognise and explain how the social context of Victorian Britain is represented in literature.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and present new information clearly. They model their expectations for pupils' work extremely well. Questioning and assessment are used successfully to deepen pupils' understanding, close any gaps in pupils' knowledge and address misconceptions in a timely manner. Teachers skilfully adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils, including those with SEND. This helps pupils to develop increasing levels of independence.

Pupils' behaviour is exceptional. They are impressive communicators and have wonderful attitudes to learning. Pupils are supported well by the excellent pastoral work and the school's focus on oracy. As a result, pupils use their strong voices to influence important aspects of the school's work. For example, pupils lead fundraising events and passionately lead assemblies on matters which are important to them.

Pupils' wider personal development is extensively promoted. There are numerous opportunities in every year group for pupil leadership, cultural enrichment through the curriculum, educational visits, additional activities and a steel pan band. 'Diversity days' promote both individualism and the importance of respect for other cultures. These opportunities enrich pupils' lives outside the classroom, and they prepare them well for life beyond in modern Britain.

Pupils, including those with SEND, benefit from a very strong careers programme. High-quality information and experiences are provided so that pupils and their parents and carers understand the choices pupils have after they leave the school.

Leaders, and those responsible for governance, work effectively together to promote a culture of continual improvement that has sustained the school's high performance. There is exceptional support for ongoing professional development, and workload is well-considered. This helps to ensure that staff are best placed to provide an ambitious and high-quality education for pupils. Staff are immensely proud to work at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in June 2018.

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 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	103103
Local authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10323352
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	895
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrea Corbett
Headteacher	Helen Marriott
Website	www.wsfg.waltham.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses two registered alternative provisions.
- 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 evaluation 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 and other senior leaders. They also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and spoke with a representative from the Haringey Educational Partnership.

- Inspectors visited a wide range of lessons and spoke with teachers. They also spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- 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 gathered the views of pupils, parents and staff through discussions and their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Lisa Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Janina Aitken

Ofsted Inspector

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