

# Wallington High School for Girls

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103012
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sutton
<b>Inspection number</b>	308198
<b>Inspection date</b>	12 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Chisnall HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1308
6th form	406
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs A Myerscough
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs B Creatorex
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 January 2005
<b>School address</b>	Woodcote Road Wallington SM6 0PH
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8647 2380
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8773 9884

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## Introduction

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector carried out the inspection. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the achievement of Key Stage 4 students and the consistency of standards between subjects; how well the school makes provision for the most able students and those who are most vulnerable; and, how effectively middle leaders and the governing body work to raise standards still further. They gathered evidence from: discussions with staff, students and representatives of the governing body; observing lessons; scrutiny of evidence supplied by the school; and gathering the views of parents from questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Wallington High School is larger than average and draws its students from a wide area. When they join the school, the attainment of students is high. There are very few students eligible for free school meals and few of them have a learning difficulty or disability. The proportion of students with a minority ethnic heritage is well above average at 42%; half of these have English as an additional language, although none is at an early stage of language acquisition. The school has specialist engineering status, and has the Gold Artsmark and Healthy Schools awards.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Wallington High School is providing its students with a good education, with many outstanding features. The most significant one of these is the outstanding achievement of the students. One parent summed this up by commenting, 'My daughter feels proud to be part of a school with such high standards'. This pride in the school is shared by most students, and rightly so. Although students start at the school with standards that are already well above average, they make excellent progress and increase the extent to which standards are above average at each key stage.

Standards at Key Stage 3 have improved over time and are exceptionally high, especially in mathematics, where almost all students gain the highest levels. Following concerted efforts by the school, there have been significant improvements in English and the proportion of students gaining the highest levels has doubled to around three-quarters, matching those in science. In Key Stage 4, most students gain the highest grades (A\*/A) and overall attainment is very high.

However, in some subjects, there have been fewer of these high grades. This pattern has also been evident in the sixth form, despite summary results being very high. There are two reasons for this. The first relates to staff absences and turnover, which have been unusually high during the last year. This situation has now stabilised and the school is fully staffed. The second, linked to the first, relates to variations in the quality of teaching. In some subjects, such as science, modern languages and information and communication technology (ICT), it has not been as consistently high as in others, such as design and technology, and business studies. Many parents identified these concerns in the inspection questionnaires. Senior leaders have been working effectively with subject departments, often with new staff, to help more students gain the highest grades. This is paying off and the gap between the most and least successful subjects is closing well. The most recent student achievement data, supported by mock exam results, show that the school is on track to achieve its GCSE targets.

A particularly strong feature of the achievement profile is the consistency between groups of students in how well they do. There are no significant differences between students from different ethnic heritages and those few with learning difficulties. They all do as well as each other. The engineering specialism has had a major impact on standards and achievement, and not just in the subjects that are directly linked, such as technology and mathematics. The work that has been done on cross-curricular themes, such as problem-solving and planning, is helping students to develop their learning skills.

Another, very significant, factor in students' excellent achievement is their personal development, which is outstanding. They display very positive attitudes towards learning and school life, enjoy school very much and are committed to working hard. Their attendance is outstanding. They, too, see the benefits of the engineering specialism; one girl noting, '...it motivates us as a girls' school because there are not many girls in engineering.' They have high aspirations for university education, and high expectations of the school to help them achieve their goals. All this is evident in lessons, where students are very well motivated, ask searching questions and are very keen to learn and do well. The behaviour of almost all students is excellent and they note that bullying is virtually non-existent. Exclusions are a very rare event.

Students have a very well developed sense of community and take pride in being able to make significant contributions to the life of the school and beyond. For example, the recently re-formed school council provides a good opportunity for students' voices to be heard at year

and whole school level. Some students helped with the recent appointment of a senior leader. Their understanding of their place in the wider world is very well developed, as evidenced by a recent international evening for parents and friends. One student perceptively commented, 'Everyone feels proud that we come from different places.' Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and students demonstrate that they are confident and caring young citizens.

The school makes first-rate provision for students to develop these attributes. The curriculum is very broad, meets need well and provides opportunities for all students to develop particular interests. The options for modern foreign languages are wider than in most schools, and supported by additional opportunities in Japanese and Latin. The engineering specialism has provided additional opportunities within design and technology, not least of which is the full GCSE option, as well as supporting the development of the wider curriculum. The curriculum also makes a major contribution to students' health and well-being, with two hours of physical education each week and a much-improved citizenship programme. There are many and varied enrichment activities that enable students to follow special interests, whether they be in music, drama, sports or languages.

Provision for students with special gifts or talents is developing well. Links with, for example, universities, enhance mathematical development and there are residential opportunities to develop engineering skills. More can still be done in some lessons to stretch the most able students consistently. There is strong academic guidance for students and they have a good understanding of how they are progressing. There are very good systems in place to identify, track and support students who might be vulnerable because of, for instance, slow progress or personal problems. Students value the school counsellor's role and note that there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. There are excellent arrangements for induction into the school and for transfer to the sixth form, and these are commended by students and their parents. The school makes all the required checks on the backgrounds of staff and these are well organised.

Teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. There is very strong commitment from staff to support students in their learning. Teachers display very good subject knowledge and their relationships with students are mostly excellent. As a result, students are motivated to learn and to ask questions. Many lessons are characterised by interesting and varied activities that engage students and draw on their prior learning and willingness to get involved in debate. However, not all the teaching is of the same high standard and there is some inconsistency between and within subject departments, particularly in the challenge given to the most able students. This is also the view of some students and parents. Senior and middle leaders recognise this and are engaged in strategies to help all staff deliver lessons of the highest quality.

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are good, with aspects that are excellent. The leadership of the headteacher and the recently reconstituted senior team is first-rate because, between them, they have accurately identified the school's strengths and areas for development, and have taken action to bring about improvements, which are bearing fruit. In some cases, such as in the 'Leading from the Middle' programme for middle managers, it is too early to see their full impact. Nevertheless, action taken to improve achievement in, for example, languages, dance and geography has resulted in higher standards. Senior and middle leaders regularly visit lessons and give teachers very clear guidance on how to improve their practice. However, there is not always enough attention given to how well students are learning and whether this is appropriate for their abilities. As a result, department improvement plans are not fully focused on the gains expected for students.

The governing body gives the school full support and is skilled at holding it to account for its work. Governors' independent visiting of the school and the links to departments could be better organised so that they take greater account of plans for improvement, their impact on learning and the views of students. With the bursar, the budget is prudently managed and, given the outcomes for students, represents excellent value for money. Several hundred parents responded to the inspection questionnaire and the majority are supportive of the school and its work with students. However, a significant minority considers that communications between the school and parents are not good enough. The school could do more to reassure parents in this respect, and to review its systems to make sure that parents' needs are fully met. Given the improvements since the last inspection and the accuracy of its self-evaluation, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

The sixth form is providing its students with an outstanding education and enabling them to do very well in their studies. Almost all Year 11 students transfer to the sixth form, as well as around 30 students from other schools. They settle very well with 'new' students commenting that their induction was very well organised so that everyone felt part of Year 12.

Standards at AS and A2 are very high and students successfully build on their GCSE performance. They have very well developed learning skills and understand that they share the responsibility for their learning with teachers. As a result, they make excellent progress and gain very good results. The school is aware of where the proportion of A and B grades has not been high enough and has taken effective action to improve performance, using for example, expertise in the local authority. Students' attitudes to learning in the sixth form are extremely positive; they have very high expectations of themselves and their teachers. They value the regular feedback they receive on their progress and know how well they are doing. They recognise that they are not 'spoon-fed', as one put it, and undertake independent study in preparation for lessons and tutorials.

Teaching is good with some that is outstanding, as in the main school. Students recognise that staff absences, in the recent past, have affected their learning but value the current stability in staffing. The school is aware of the need to ensure that all the sixth form teaching is as good as the best. The curriculum offer is broad and students value the wide range of options open to them, including the extra-curricular arrangements, such as the 'management' day with a nearby boys' grammar school. There are many opportunities for students to take responsibility around the school; they do this very well. These include the prefect system, mentoring younger students and the Young Enterprise work in making and selling badges for charity. The leadership of the sixth form is highly effective in meeting students' needs and in taking action to improve what is already high quality provision.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the consistency of teaching across the school so that more of it is at the level of the best.
- Ensure that the monitoring of lessons and planning for improvement have a more consistent focus on students' learning.
- Review the arrangements for communicating with parents so that they can see how their views and concerns are acted upon.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.



## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Wallington High School for Girls, Wallington, SM6 0PH

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently, and for the discussions we had. We are pleased to be able to report to you about what we found.

Yours is a good school with much that is excellent. The most important aspect is that standards are very high. You attend very well, work hard and make excellent progress. As a result, almost all of you gain high grades in your exams, enabling you to fulfil your potential in higher education or employment. In some subjects, there have not been as many of the highest grades as in other subjects. We recognise that there have been staff changes recently, interrupting learning in some cases. Things are now settled and more of you are on target to get very high grades.

We were impressed by your excellent behaviour, and by your attitudes to school. The school is helping you to become mature young citizens. This has a big impact on your learning, as you are keen to work hard and do well. You and your parents said that much of the teaching you receive is of high quality, but there are some lessons that are not as good. We agree, and have asked the school to work with staff to ensure that more lessons are as good as the best. Senior staff and heads of department often come into lessons to help teachers with their practice. We have asked them to look more closely at what you are learning so that plans for improvement can be better aimed at 'what's in it for you'.

The curriculum is excellent because it covers many subjects and is enriched by additional activities. The engineering status has had a very positive impact on school life in general. Staff make sure that you are well supported as you move through the school and meet your academic and personal needs very well. The leadership of the school is good and the headteacher and senior team know its strengths and areas for development very well. Some of your parents have concerns about the way the school communicates with them. There are systems in place for such communication, and for acting on your views and those of your parents. However, we have asked the school to look again at how these systems work so that it can reassure parents that they are effective.

I hope you will take the trouble to read the full report (it is not very long) as it has more detail that would interest you. I wish you every success in your coming tests and examinations.

Yours sincerely

Michael Chisnall  
Her Majesty's Inspector