

Inspection of Watford Grammar School for Girls

Lady's Close, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD18 0AE

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 March 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	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Sylvia Tai. This school is part of Watford Grammar School for Girls single academy trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Nick Moorhouse.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Watford Grammar School for Girls under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Watford Grammar School for Girls to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are rightly proud to attend this remarkable school. Pupils are caring, kind and considerate of others. Being a 'Watford Girl' is important because it gives pupils a strong sense of belonging, heritage and shared values. While recognising its rich history, the school continues to adapt and evolve to provide the best opportunities for pupils.

The school has a high ambition for what all pupils can achieve. This means that pupils, regardless of their starting points, achieve well and participate highly in the wide range of opportunities that the school offers.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils consistently rise to meet these. Pupils are well cared for through their daily interactions with staff, effective pastoral support and weekly academic tutoring sessions, where their progress and well-being are discussed.

Pupils come from a diverse range of backgrounds. They appreciate how well the school helps them to understand diversity in their school community and the wider world. One pupil expressed what many felt, 'We're not just tolerant of difference. The school helps us to celebrate it'. This is promoted through the curriculum, visiting speakers and work in the local community.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious and well thought out curriculum. Although there is a sharp focus on academic subjects, the school ensures that pupils receive a high-quality education in the arts, practical subjects and physical education. Pupils value the range of subjects that they study and the extra-curricular opportunities that these subjects provide. The school continually reviews and looks to improve already strong areas to make them even better. Pupils are highly knowledgeable and achieve exceptionally well in national examinations. This prepares them well for future study and employment.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn the curriculum successfully and achieve particularly well. The school has acted robustly to strengthen the help that pupils with SEND receive in recent years. There are effective processes for identifying pupils with SEND. Teachers receive the information and training they need to support pupils with SEND well. This ensures that pupils get the help they need in a timely way.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Regular training ensures teachers keep up to date with their subject and teaching expertise. This contributes to highly effective teaching in the school and sixth form. Teachers explain things clearly. They use questioning skilfully to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. Consequently, pupils think hard about what they are learning and ask thoughtful questions about subject content. Teachers check routinely on how well pupils are learning. Teachers

use these checks to adapt the curriculum and teaching carefully where needed. All of this enables pupils to learn exceptionally well.

Reading is prioritised from the moment that pupils start in Year 7. They have frequent opportunities to read across the curriculum and in tutor times. Many pupils use time outside of lessons to read for pleasure. The well-used library is a hive of activity throughout the day. Pupils see reading as an essential skill because the school teaches them it is important. Pupils who struggle to read get highly effective support to become fluent readers. This helps them access the curriculum successfully.

Pupils' attitudes towards others and their learning are highly positive. These are underpinned by a set of values that the school has crafted in close collaboration with the whole school community. Lessons are free of disruption, enabling pupils to focus on learning. Teachers swiftly address off-task behaviour on the rare occasions it occurs.

There is a well-planned, coherent programme of personal development from Year 7 to Year 13. Pupils gain the age-appropriate knowledge they need to understand the world, stay safe and contribute positively to society. Pupils value this aspect of the school's work. There is a comprehensive careers programme in place. This prepares pupils and students extremely well in considering and taking their next steps in education and employment. Disadvantaged pupils receive bespoke help and guidance to ensure they have the same opportunities as others.

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. Staff are proud to work here. 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. This helps to ensure a stable, dedicated staff body.

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	136289
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10211897
Type of school	Secondary
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	1451
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	401
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nick Moorhouse
Headteacher	Sylvia Tai
Website	www.watfordgrammarschoolforgirls.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school became an academy in September 2010. The current headteacher took up post in April 2018.
- The school is partially selective by academic and musical ability.
- 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.
- The school has a religious character. The required inspection of denominational education given to pupils, and the content of the school's collective worship, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 is likely overdue. However, the school has planned for this to be completed and the process is underway.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors 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 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.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the board of trustees, including the chair of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, modern foreign languages, science and computing. 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 also considered the curriculum, assessment and teaching in some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with pupils from different year groups to talk about their experiences at school. 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

Marc White, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sharon Pritchard	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Warburton	Ofsted Inspector
Yvonne Chisholm	Ofsted Inspector
Donna Young	Ofsted Inspector

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