

Inspection of West Kirby Grammar School

Graham Road, West Kirby, Wirral, Merseyside CH48 5DP

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected West Kirby Grammar School as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

At West Kirby Grammar School, pupils, and students in the sixth form, thrive. They are confident and articulate with a fervour for learning. Pupils and students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), strive to live up to leaders' high expectations of them. Pupils and students enjoy strong academic success.

Pupils and students share a sense of belonging at this school. They are accepted for who they are. This helps them to feel safe and happy. Pupils are kind to each other. They spoke of a respectful culture throughout the school where discriminatory behaviour is not a concern. Most pupils feel that teachers deal with any rare incidents of bullying well.

Leaders expect pupils to behave well. Corridors are calm. Classrooms are vibrant spaces where pupils are eager to discuss their learning with their teachers.

Pupils and students spoke enthusiastically about the extensive range of extra-curricular activities available to them such as sports, philosophy, drama and music clubs. Pupils and students assume leadership roles with pride. They appreciate the many opportunities that they have to contribute positively to the local community.

Pupils and students are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, they value their 'world views' lessons when they learn about different faiths and cultures.

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

Leaders and governors are aspirational for all pupils, and students in the sixth form, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged. They are passionate about creating scholars of the future. In the main, the curriculum is broad and suitably ambitious. For example, pupils benefit from studying a wide range of subjects at key stage 4, including modern foreign languages, humanities and creative subjects. However, leaders have recently taken judicious steps to increase the depth of the key stage 3 curriculum. This is so that pupils can deepen their learning and their passion for different subjects.

In many subjects, including in the sixth form, leaders have designed and organised the curriculum expertly so that pupils and students can build securely on what they already know. Subject leaders have thought deeply about the essential knowledge that pupils and students must learn and the order in which this knowledge should be taught. Staff build opportunities into the curriculum for pupils to revisit and consolidate their learning as a matter of routine. Pupils and students achieve highly.

Teachers are experts in their fields. They have strong subject knowledge that they use to deliver the curriculum well in most subjects. Teachers are enthusiastic about enhancing pupils' and students' understanding and appreciation of the world

through the curriculum. In the majority of subjects, teachers design learning that helps pupils and students to learn the curriculum well.

In a few subjects, leaders do not check how well teachers are delivering the curriculum. Occasionally, teachers do not ensure that the work that they give to pupils is demanding enough to help them to learn the knowledge that they need. From time to time, this hinders how well some pupils learn.

In lessons, most teachers address pupils' misconceptions quickly. Teachers are skilled in ascertaining when pupils are ready to move on to new concepts. Those students joining the school in Year 12 said that teachers support them well to address any gaps in learning that they may have. However, leaders' systems for checking how well pupils have learned the curriculum over time in key stage 3 are less convincing. In a few subjects, some teachers do not understand how to use assessment strategies well to identify gaps in pupils' learning.

Leaders identify pupils' additional needs quickly and accurately. They ensure that teachers are furnished with a wealth of information and resources to enable them to support pupils with SEND effectively. As a result, teachers are becoming increasingly adept at modifying their delivery of the curriculum. This ensures that pupils with SEND learn well alongside their peers.

Most pupils and students read widely and often. Through the effective reading curriculum, they experience a wide literary canon. Pupils and students regularly engage in meaningful debates about texts. Leaders are in the process of refining their support for pupils who find reading more difficult so that these pupils can continue to learn well.

For the most part, pupils and students behave impeccably in the classroom. Relationships with teachers are strong. Most pupils and students demonstrate perseverance and a commitment to learning. Their learning is free from disruption.

Leaders have strengthened the provision for pupils' and students' broader personal development. Pupils and students spoke enthusiastically about their learning in these lessons and how relevant the content is to their everyday lives. Leaders' support for pupils' mental health is strong.

Students in the sixth form told inspectors that they feel inspired by each other. Students spoke positively about the support that they receive in preparation for their futures. Most students progress on to aspirational destinations when leaving school.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school. They share leaders' vision and dedication to improve the quality of education for all pupils. Staff appreciate leaders' consideration of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained. They are fully conversant in the processes for keeping pupils safe. Staff remain vigilant about the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. They report and follow up concerns about pupils diligently.

Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families get the timely support that they need.

Pupils and students spoke in detail about how they are taught about risks in the wider community, such as drug and alcohol misuse. They learn how to foster and maintain healthy relationships and how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject leaders do not check how effectively teachers are delivering the curriculum. As a result, there are times when the work that some teachers give to pupils does not reflect the ambition or knowledge in the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders are fully equipped to support teachers to deliver the curriculum consistently well.
- In a small number of subjects in key stage 3, leaders' assessment systems do not support teachers to check how well pupils are learning the curriculum over time. As a result, some teachers do not identify the gaps in pupils' learning swiftly enough. As leaders finalise their curriculum thinking, they should ensure that teachers use assessment strategies more effectively in these subjects.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	137243
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10226376
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	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,275
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	348
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governors	Andrew Waller
Headteacher	Simeon Clarke
Website	www.wkgs.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- West Kirby Grammar School converted to become an academy school in August 2011. When its predecessor school, West Kirby Grammar School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- Leaders use one registered and one unregistered alternative provider for a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and a range of teaching and support staff. An inspector spoke with four members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair of governors.
- An inspector also met with the school improvement partner.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history, science, physical education and modern foreign languages. Inspectors met with curriculum leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited some lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils and teachers.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from Years 7 to 11 and with students in the sixth form. Inspectors also observed pupils' movements around school.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding procedures and the checks made on staff. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the culture of safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, the school self-evaluation documents, the curriculum, minutes from meetings of governors and behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors considered the views of the parents and carers who responded to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Rachel Goodwin, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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