

School inspection report

16 to 18 April 2024

Wolverhampton Grammar School

Compton Road
Wolverhampton
West Midlands
WV3 9RB

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Pupils achieve well academically, develop their confidence and are equipped with life skills which help them to develop a sense of social responsibility. The school's values of respect, individuality, equity and kindness are evident in all aspects of school life.
2. Leaders have designed a curriculum that is well matched to the needs and aspirations of pupils. It is supported by an extensive extra-curricular programme. There are many opportunities available for pupils which contribute positively to pupils' wellbeing, enrich and extend their knowledge, and further develop their self-confidence, physical, creative and performance skills.
3. Pupils including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well at all stages of their education and make good progress in relation to their starting points. Most pupils attain GCSE and A-level grades which prepare them well for the next stage of their education or employment.
4. Teachers have good subject knowledge and usually plan lessons effectively, so that pupils develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed. Pupils typically show high levels of engagement and make good progress. However, in a few cases, in the senior school, the activities set by teachers do not take full account of pupils' abilities or of what pupils already know. This leads to the level of challenge not being appropriate for some pupils and consequently their rate of learning is reduced.
5. Leaders and some subject staff analyse pupil data and the results of assessments to check on the progress pupils make. They tailor the provision and develop appropriate strategies where needed to enable pupils to raise their attainment. However, the effective use of pupils' assessment information to inform the planning of lessons and to track pupils' progress in the senior school is inconsistent.
6. Children in the early years, follow a well-planned curriculum designed to cover the required areas of learning. The curriculum is further enriched by specialist activities such as music. Children make good progress, engaging in a wide range of activities indoors and outside. Teachers provide interesting activities which are matched appropriately to support children's on-going development.
7. Leaders have established a carefully planned and well-implemented personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum which includes relationships and sex education (RSE). Supported by specialist teaching, pupils become increasingly knowledgeable about key topics relating to their personal development and wellbeing.
8. Leaders and teachers actively promote mutual respect, and diversity and individuality are celebrated. Pupils have a strong feeling of belonging and value being able to support their peers, represent their ideas and organise events for the community.
9. In line with the school's aim of making a difference to society, pupils readily embrace the many opportunities to contribute to the lives of others both within school and the local community. Leaders have introduced major changes in careers education and guidance. The new careers programme is highly effective and helps pupils to make informed decisions about their future pathways.
10. Safeguarding is prioritised. Governors and leaders regularly check safeguarding arrangements to ensure they are effective. Staff are appropriately trained. Pupils are taught about safeguarding; they

know how to keep themselves safe, including online, and how to report any concerns they may have.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should ensure that:

- the level of challenge in senior school lessons is appropriately matched to pupils' prior attainment so that pupils make good progress in all subject areas
- pupils' prior achievement data and assessment results are effectively and consistently used in the senior school to track progress and inform future planning of learning.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders and governors promote pupil wellbeing effectively. This is evident in their decision to redevelop the curriculum provision for PSHE, RSE and careers guidance. The recently introduced and comprehensive wellbeing programme is taught by specialist staff. It is proving to be highly effective in supporting pupils' personal development.
12. Governors know the school well from their frequent visits, meetings with leaders and staff and sampling of the pupils' experience. Governors provide effective support and challenge to ensure leaders fulfil their responsibilities.
13. Leaders have a clear strategic plan for the school's future based on a thorough understanding of its strengths and areas for further development. Feedback from pupils, parents and staff and detailed reviews of the existing provision are considered when making future plans for improvement. This enables leaders to be responsive to pupils' emerging needs. For example, pupils provided feedback on their sense of belonging and leaders used pupils' views to build their approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. This has included the development by pupils and staff of a renewed values statement highlighting that Wolverhampton Grammar School (WGS) is an inclusive community built on respect, individuality, equity, and kindness.
14. Leaders successfully inspire pupils' academic achievements, develop their confidence, equip them with life skills, and help pupils to develop a sense of social responsibility. Leaders ensure that pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing are effectively supported through the curriculum, the extensive extra-curricular programme and the strong pastoral care system.
15. Since the previous inspection, leaders have successfully introduced Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes. Leaders' understanding of the early years statutory framework and the development needs of young children has been used well and continues to ensure that the early years setting is well led. Leaders plan and provide activities that reflect children's interests and enable children to make good progress across all the areas of learning that are expected.
16. Leaders carry out their roles effectively. They ensure that policies are implemented appropriately. They carefully check and analyse information they have so they can identify and deal with areas for further improvement to the quality of pupils' education.
17. Leaders take a strategic, broad and inclusive approach to identifying and managing the risk of harm to pupils' wellbeing. Leaders regularly review and are alert to new risks that may arise. They take suitable mitigating action. There are appropriate policies in place which cover a wide range of potential risks related both to pupils' welfare and also their safety. These policies provide staff with clear direction and are followed well in practice. Leaders carry out thorough checks for aspects such as the safety of the premises, educational trips, recruitment and potentially hazardous activities.
18. Staff and leaders, are readily accessible to parents and deal with any concerns promptly. Complaints are recorded and responded to appropriately and within the published timeframes.
19. Reports to parents on pupils' progress and attainment are regular, detailed and informative. Information about school policies and procedures is made available on the school website or sent directly to parents.

20. Leaders understand their responsibilities under the Equality Act. The education provided by the school does not discriminate, and reasonable adjustments are made for those pupils who have SEND. A suitable accessibility plan is in place, which is regularly reviewed.
21. Leaders consult with external agencies when appropriate. They develop open and productive relationships with organisations, such as contacting local safeguarding partners or arranging for monitoring of the early years setting with the local authority.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

- 22. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. The curriculum has been designed well. It is well suited to the ages, aptitudes and needs of the pupils and provides an appropriate range of subjects and experiences. Since the previous inspection, there have been changes made to the GCSE options system and additional subjects have been introduced which offers pupils greater flexibility and choice.
24. Children in the early years settle well and make good progress in their learning and development. Adults build supportive and positive relationships with them. Adults ask useful questions which develop children's vocabulary and understanding. As a result, children from an early age become confident speakers. Equally, children develop their reading skills well. They are interested and involved in their learning, interact appropriately and develop their concentration and listening skills well. Children choose some activities for themselves and staff often guide children's decisions to support them to further develop their knowledge and skills. Staff provide well-planned topic opportunities and activities for children to use descriptive language and practise their numeracy skills, such as studying the lifecycle of butterflies and finding the total number of caterpillars in two containers.
25. Through careful planning, the quality of teaching generally enables pupils to develop their skills and knowledge and make good progress across subjects. However, In the senior school some teaching is not planned sufficiently well to take into account what all pupils already know and can do. The level of challenge for some pupils is then not appropriate to their ability and they find the work too difficult or too easy, so their rate of learning is reduced.
26. Leaders use pupil data information and the results of assessments to check pupils' progress well. In some subjects, teachers then use this information to adapt learning activities and develop appropriate strategies so all pupils can learn well and raise their attainment. However, in the senior school, there is inconsistency in the effective use of data information to inform the effective planning of learning to ensure that pupils make the best progress they can.
27. At GCSE and A level, most pupils including those who have English as an additional language and those who have SEND, attain grades which help pupils access the next stage of their education or training. Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved pupils' achievements at A level and as a result, pupils have a wider choice of higher education opportunities.
28. Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive and encouraging. Pupils have the confidence to answer questions, express their views and ask for clarification. Teachers provide useful feedback which helps pupils understand what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve their work.
29. Leaders effectively provide for pupils who have SEND so their individual needs are met. There is a well-structured approach in place of additional support within lessons coupled with specialist guidance outside the classroom environment to enable pupils to make the best progress they can.
30. There is an extensive range of opportunities for pupils to widen their learning experiences through a broad range of physical and creative extra-curricular activities. Pupils appreciate both the number of options available and the ownership they are given over their choices. Some activities are pupil initiated and pupil led such as the 'pudding lectures', where students from the sixth form give short lectures on a range of topics and answer their peers' questions. Pupils enhance their collaborative,

creative and communication skills through activities such as story garden book club, comic and animation club, cookery, big band, volleyball and philosophy club.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

31. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

32. There is a well-developed and comprehensive personal development programme. This is informed by the views of pupils and taught in PSHE lessons in the junior school, wellbeing lessons in the seniors and through tutor time activities. Talks from guest speakers also enrich and reinforce pupils' learning. The curriculum is adapted in response to external events, and teachers regularly review pupils' feedback to ensure that content is relevant and useful to them.
33. The PSHE programme includes age-appropriate provision for RSE and pupils improve their knowledge and understanding of issues that they may be facing. For example, younger pupils recognise what makes a good friend and older pupils can identify the features of appropriate and inappropriate relationships.
34. Pupils are engaged in their PSHE learning and are well informed. Appropriately trained wellbeing staff are highly effective in creating an atmosphere in which pupils feel comfortable learning about and discussing sensitive issues. Wellbeing drop-in sessions at lunch times provide pupils with the opportunity to speak to staff on a one to one or small group basis. Pupils appreciate that there are many adults with whom they can discuss any concerns they may have. This is in addition to the online tools they can use to share concerns.
35. Pupils are taught to effectively use a variety of strategies to support and develop their mental wellbeing and their management of stress. Staff use assemblies to highlight the support available and to provide organised events such as during mental health awareness week to promote discussion of mental wellbeing.
36. Pupils' spiritual, cultural and moral understanding is developed through assemblies and an effective range of activities and topics in PSHE lessons. Staff use their teaching of religious studies, art, music and drama to encourage pupils to develop an appreciation and a sense of awe and wonder in their subject.
37. Staff nurture the tremendous sense of community which pervades the school. Interactions between staff and pupils are supportive and mutually respectful and this engenders trusting relationships.
38. There is a strong culture of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). This is enhanced by the work of the pupil diversity champions, who organise a calendar of events to focus on a different protected characteristic. Pupils show respect and understand differences. They have a clear sense of self as well as a strong sense of belonging to the school community. This is reinforced by PSHE lessons where pupils consider questions such as what is my personal identity and why is diversity important.
39. Many pupils hold positions of responsibility on the eco or school councils in the junior school and as house captains, student voice representatives and wellbeing peer mentors in the senior school. These positions of responsibility help pupils to further grow in self-confidence and self-esteem. Pupils are proud of their active leadership roles and the contribution they make.
40. Pupils, including children in the early years, have extensive opportunities to participate in physical activities both within the well-planned physical education programme and through wider extra-curricular sporting activities at lunchtime and after school.

41. Pupils are appropriately supervised. Clear expectations of behaviour and positive relationships between staff and pupils result in pupils behaving well. Pupils feel that the system for rewards and sanctions is fair and used appropriately. The school has an appropriate antibullying strategy and effective procedures for responding to any incidents of bullying.
42. The premises are maintained appropriately with effective health and safety arrangements in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Suitable precautions are taken to reduce the risk from fire. Staff receive regular fire-safety training.
43. Suitable arrangements and accommodation are in place to care for pupils who become unwell. Staff are appropriately trained to deliver first aid, including for children in the early years. The attendance and admission registers are properly maintained and stored.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 44. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

45. The values of being an inclusive and inspiring community built on respect, individuality, equity and kindness are evident in all aspects of school life and are actively promoted. On a recent 'we are WGS day' which celebrated the diversity of the school community, pupils enjoyed the opportunity to express their culture or identity through wearing clothes that reflected their heritage, hobby or passion.
46. The highly effective teaching of PSHE and the expectations set by all staff ensure that pupils are aware and respectful of protected characteristics. Pupils appreciate being part of a diverse, multicultural community in which all individuals are valued. They show respectful interest in assemblies led by their peers and recognise the insight they provide into others' perspectives, faiths and cultures. Pupils are accepting of differing views and listen carefully to those with opposing views, such as in a recent Year 3 debate about the frequent use of air travel and implications for climate change.
47. The PSHE programme includes coverage of topics which encourage pupils to develop social skills. For example, children in the early years consider questions such as why should I share, and how can I help others. From an early age, pupils are taught how society is organised and governed. Pupils experience the process of democracy through school council or student voice meetings, class circle time, voting on school charities and being consulted on things such as the development of the PSHE scheme of work.
48. Staff ensure pupils understand British values, such as the rule of law, through well-planned activities, such as considering what society would be like without laws, talks from magistrates and discussions on how the law deals with young offenders. Learning about the reasons behind laws or rules that govern and protect further develops pupils' strong sense of right and wrong and of fairness.
49. Staff encourage pupils to reflect on their approach to learning and their interactions with each other. Pupils take responsibility for their behaviour, actions and decisions. The renewed house system in the senior school, helps to promote positive and constructive relationships between pupils in different year groups. Pupils organise and take part in a wide variety of extra-curricular challenges and fun house competitions, which encourages pupils to contribute and work together.
50. The pupil charity committee organise activities for pupils to make a difference to the lives of others through fund raising and local charitable works. These activities range from litter picking in local parks, a junior school 'charity week' where classes create and run fundraising stalls, singing carols, tidying the garden at a local care home and an annual charity relay run of a 170-mile coast to coast route by a group of Year 10 pupils.
51. Pupils are well prepared for life in British society and for the next stage of their education. The careers guidance programme has recently been redeveloped to ensure that pupils are supported effectively in their learning about a wide variety of careers paths. The comprehensive careers guidance programme includes coverage in PSHE lessons, careers events, talks from visiting speakers, individual advice meetings and work experience placements. Pupils explore a range of options and are well-equipped to make informed decisions about their future studies and employment. Pupils

appreciate and benefit from the highly personalised careers programme. Sixth-form pupils go on to study a diverse range of courses at a variety of institutions.

52. Throughout the school economic wellbeing and money matters are taught in an age-appropriate way enabling pupils to develop an effective financial awareness. For example, Year 1 pupils consider how they can keep their money safe, Year 8 pupils learn about national insurance and income tax and Year 13 pupils consider the economics of renting property versus buying.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

- 53. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Safeguarding

54. Suitable arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. Leaders promote a culture of awareness and openness which encourages pupils and staff to readily report any concerns.
55. Leaders appropriately train all staff and volunteers as they join the school. Leaders provide further training at regular intervals together with a weekly safeguarding bulletin to ensure staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues. Staff understand how to recognise and report a safeguarding concern, including potential child-on-child abuse. Those with designated safeguarding lead responsibilities receive appropriate training.
56. Any reported safeguarding concerns are acted upon promptly and if incidents occur, they are managed well. Designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) work effectively with external agencies when concerns arise. Any referrals to children’s services, the local authority designated officer and the police are made in a timely manner.
57. The written safeguarding policy is in line with the most recent guidance and accurately reflects everyone’s safeguarding practice. Effective measures are taken to manage identified risks associated with pupils’ safeguarding needs. Detailed safeguarding records are kept, in line with statutory requirements.
58. Pupils develop an appropriate understanding of risk taking and personal safety. Online safety is taught effectively and the content of the programme of lessons, tutor periods and assemblies are regularly reviewed to make sure that pupils know how to stay safe while online. There are suitable monitoring and filtering processes in place.
59. Staff with designated safeguarding responsibilities and the safeguarding governor meet regularly to discuss safeguarding issues, analyse trends, and review the school’s response strategies. The findings of these meetings are discussed by the governing body as part of their management oversight. Leaders’ reviews of trends and feedback from pupil surveys inform safeguarding practice and messaging to pupils.
60. Recruitment procedures are robust and the necessary safer recruitment checks are completed for all staff, volunteers and members of the governing body. The record of appointment checks is kept appropriately and regularly scrutinised by the safeguarding governor as part of checking the school’s arrangements.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 61. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Wolverhampton Grammar School
Department for Education number	336/6023
Registered charity number	1125268
Address	Wolverhampton Grammar School Compton Road Wolverhampton West Midlands WV3 9RB
Phone number	01902 421326
Email address	wgs@wgs-sch.net
Website	wgs.org.uk
Proprietor	The Board of Governors of Wolverhampton Grammar School
Chair	Mr James Sage
Headteacher	Mr Nic Anderson
Age range	4 to 18
Number of pupils	780
Date of previous inspection	5 to 6 February 2020

Information about the school

62. Wolverhampton Grammar School is a co-educational day school located in Wolverhampton, West Midlands. Since the previous inspection, the school has extended its age range from 7 – 18 years to 4 – 18 years. The school comprises a junior school, which contains the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting, and a senior school, which includes a sixth form. A new headteacher took up post in September 2023. The school is a registered charity and is governed by a board of directors.
63. There are 20 children in the early years part of the school which comprises one Reception class.
64. The school has identified 227 pupils as having SEND. Very few pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
65. English is an additional language for 336 pupils.
66. The school's mission is to deliver an education that transforms lives as well as minds. It aims to treat each child as an individual and to inspire academic achievement. The school seeks to grow pupils' confidence, equip them with life skills and help them to develop a sense of social responsibility so that they believe they can make a difference in contributing to society and the world beyond school.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

16 to 18 April 2024

67. A team of seven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

68. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

69. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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