

# Walderslade Girls' School

Bradfields Avenue, Walderslade, Chatham, Kent ME5 0LE

## Inspection dates

12–13 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not been effective in addressing the decline in the progress of pupils since the last inspection.
- In 2016, the progress of pupils was below that of other pupils nationally. In 2017, attainment in mathematics was well below that in 2016.
- Governors have not challenged leaders well enough to ensure that pupils make sufficient progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have not addressed the variation in the quality of teaching and learning within and between subjects.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and the quality of questioning is too variable across the school.
- Leaders over time have not been precise enough in identifying the actions needed to improve pupils' outcomes. The most able pupils are not consistently given work that is challenging enough to enable them to make good progress.
- In mathematics, teachers have not adapted their teaching well enough to meet the demands of the new curriculum.
- Leaders recognise that swift action is needed to use funding more effectively to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- In the past, the curriculum choices made by pupils have been too narrow, leading to less choice of courses post-16. Leaders have taken action now to ensure that pupils are following a more broad and balanced curriculum.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher is ambitious to improve the school and is taking appropriate action to improve pupils' progress.
- Strong leadership in the sixth form enables students to make good progress, especially in technical and vocational qualifications.
- A strong culture of mutual respect, tolerance and diversity exists among pupils in the school.
- Safeguarding is highly effective and pupils are taught well how to keep themselves safe.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress, by:
  - identifying, especially in those subjects in which pupils do not do well, the main elements of weak knowledge in key stage 4 pupils' understanding
  - ensuring that the essential knowledge is identified and mastered at key stage 3
  - ensuring that teachers fully understand and teach to the requirements of the new GCSE specifications, particularly in mathematics.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of teaching and learning, by:
  - checking that all pupils, particularly the most able, do not do work that is too easy for them and, when necessary, that more challenging work is provided for those who are ready to move on across all ability groups
  - ensuring that teachers use appropriate subject-specific language
  - developing the style and variety of questions that teachers pose so they make pupils think hard and justify their answers
  - extending the sharing of successful teaching and learning that already exists in several subjects to all subjects.
- To ensure that pupils are better prepared for the next stage of education, by:
  - enabling more pupils to take a broader range of subjects.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership, by:
  - ensuring that governors have a clear understanding of how to challenge leaders to improve the progress of pupils, especially that of disadvantaged pupils.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders have not always been effective in addressing the decline in the performance of pupils since the last inspection. In the past, leaders' aspirations for what pupils can achieve have not been high enough.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths has been too generous. This has led to insufficient challenge of weaknesses in some subjects.
- Leaders review subjects. The actions arising from these reviews have not been precise enough to bring about improvements in teaching and learning.
- Leaders' evaluation of pupils' current progress is, at times, overgenerous. Their evaluation does not identify issues and actions precisely enough to improve the progress of vulnerable groups of pupils.
- In the past, the curriculum choices at GCSE made by pupils have been too narrow, leading to limited choices of post-16 courses. Pupils do not have the option to take two languages. The new headteacher has taken swift action to ensure that more students have the opportunity to study a broad and balanced curriculum.
- The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school and high aspirations of what the pupils can achieve. Appropriate actions have been put in place to ensure that the pupils make more rapid progress, especially the most able.
- Parents' views of the school are not always positive, especially those from the parents with pupils in the older year groups. Leaders recognise that better communication is needed with parents.
- Teachers know who the disadvantaged pupils are in their classes but a coordinated whole-school approach is not yet in place to share best practice.
- Leaders have not always evaluated effectively how the funding to support disadvantaged pupils is making a difference in raising attainment. However, Year 7 catch-up funding is used more effectively and is improving the pupils' reading ages.
- Additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is helping them to make progress. Although leaders are not always clear on which strategies are most effective.
- Teachers' performance management is rigorous and staff targets are linked to pupils' results. The headteacher ensures that objectives set by teachers are pupil-focused but these are yet to impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Staff value the professional development they receive. Newly qualified teachers are enthusiastic and value the supportive and constructive feedback from mentors. The school is offering good support to trainee teachers. Further professional qualifications are available for middle leaders aspiring to senior leadership positions.
- Teachers feel well supported by the new headteacher and other leaders. Teachers are very positive about the changes made by leaders in recent months.
- Leaders prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils are tolerant of other cultures and they have a good understanding of democracy; for example, pupils took

part in their own Brexit vote. Leadership of social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils is a strength.

- Pupils have good opportunities beyond the taught curriculum through a range of enrichment activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme but especially through the many shows, productions and sporting events.

## **Governance of the school**

- Although governors have a broad understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, their evaluations are often too superficial. Consequently, they demonstrate a lack of urgency to bring about improvement. Governors do not challenge leaders sufficiently well to address the poor performance of pupils in some subjects.
- Governors are ambitious for the school and share the headteacher's vision. They have a clear view of the future direction of the school. They monitor the performance management of teachers well and ensure that the links to pay progression are clear.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils, and the recording of these checks meets statutory requirements.
- Leaders, governors and staff receive relevant and useful training and updates. Consequently, they understand and carry out their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe well. Staff are vigilant about external dangers to pupils, for example responding rapidly to the risks of gang culture and child sexual exploitation.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through the effective personal, social and health education programme and through focused assemblies. They know what to do if they have any concerns, including when using the internet. Pupils are very aware of the potential dangers in wider society. Parents are able to access useful information on the school website on how to keep their children safe when using the internet.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching and learning is too variable within and between subjects. Where teaching is weak, teachers do not plan well enough to meet the needs of all abilities, especially the most able. Where teaching is stronger, such as in dance, pupils are enthusiastic and progress well. Some extremely good learning exists across the school, with rapid progress and enjoyment evident.
- The most able pupils are not consistently challenged, particularly in mathematics, science and languages, because the work is too easy for them.
- In mathematics, teachers do not adapt their teaching well enough to meet the demands of the new curriculum. As a result, pupils' progress in Year 11 is well below their targets.
- In languages, teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for the pupils to

use the spoken language. Teachers do not model consistently how to pronounce and structure sentences in the language, leading to slow progress.

- The school's assessment system is not well established across all subjects in the lower school. There is not a clear consensus among middle leaders about how pupils should be assessed. This leads to pupils being unclear on what they are trying to achieve.
- Where teaching is stronger, effective questioning by the teacher leads to pupils having a greater knowledge of the topic. When questioning is carefully constructed and sequenced, it leads to pupils deepening their understanding of the subject and complex work is mastered, as in English and history. Where questions are too simple, pupils' thinking and understanding does not deepen.
- In key stage 4 when teaching is stronger, pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve their work. In art, for example, pupils are rapidly improving their work due to the clear teacher instruction and the quality of feedback provided.
- Pupils take pride in their work, leading to consistently good presentation. Pupils are attentive and focused on their learning in lessons. The relationship between teachers and pupils in lessons is positive.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. This is a strength of the school and the pupils appreciate the care and guidance provided by the staff. Pupils feel safe.
- Pupils were confident in speaking to inspectors and were very happy and willing to talk about their work.
- Pupils are respectful towards each other and especially to pupils from different backgrounds. Teachers have developed positive work on diversity, enabling all pupils to have a real sense of identity. The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender day was received well by pupils, many of whom still wear their badges with pride. It is clear from pupils' comments that they are accepted for who they are.
- Pupils' participation in democracy is strong and through the school council pupils have influenced leadership decisions, for example in choosing the new sports kit.
- Alternative off-site provision is available and the teachers are diligent at checking pupils' progress.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online. Assemblies on e-safety have been received well by pupils. Leaders recognise the dangers beyond the school gates and ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils know an adult who they would speak to if they had any concerns about their own or their friends' problems.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conducted themselves particularly well when moving around the building. Even in small corridors pupils were patient and respectful towards each other.
- Pupils are very focused on learning in lessons, with only a few instances of off-task behaviour seen. It is clear that pupils want to learn.
- Parents and some pupils did state that sometimes poor behaviour and bullying occurred outside lessons, often associated with social media. At the time of the inspection, no poor behaviour was observed. Pupils did say that the behaviour had improved recently due to the behaviour policy introduced by the new headteacher.
- When bullying did occur, the pupils said that it was dealt with well by staff. Pupils feel supported by staff.
- The inclusion room has been effective in reducing the previously high level of fixed-term exclusions. The work provided to pupils who attend the room is appropriate and the interventions to improve future behaviour are effective.
- Pupils' work is celebrated extensively around the building and it is clear that pupils respect each other's efforts. On outdoor playground areas, pupils do not always show respect their environment, for example when they drop litter.
- Attendance is improving well, including that of disadvantaged pupils, due to effective strategies used by leaders. Historically, it has been well below the national average.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is too variable between subjects. In too many lessons pupils are not provided with sufficient challenge to enable them to make good progress over time.
- Most-able pupils in some mathematics lessons do not make enough progress because the work is not challenging enough.
- Progress of some pupils in science is restricted due to insufficient emphasis on the use of scientific language to deepen their understanding.
- In key stage 3 French, pupils' oral skills are not well developed due to limited opportunities for them to hear and speak the language.
- In 2016, the progress of pupils was well below that of other pupils nationally, especially for disadvantaged pupils. In many subjects, the number of pupils attaining higher grade passes in 2017 was lower than in 2016 and below the national averages for all schools.
- Attainment of pupils in mathematics was much lower in 2017 than in 2016. Leaders recognise that teachers have not prepared pupils well enough to meet the demands of the new GCSE examinations in 2017.
- In the past, too many pupils have chosen to follow a narrow range of GCSEs that restricts their choice of options post-16. Leaders are now addressing this through the organisation of the GCSE options. There are still very few pupils choosing languages at GCSE.

- In art, dance and history pupils make rapid progress due to the teachers' strong subject knowledge. This leads to pupils making progress at least in line with other pupils nationally.
- Pupils progress well in English due to effective teaching that helps to deepen their knowledge and understanding of texts. Disadvantaged pupils are making progress similar to that of other pupils in English.
- Leaders' appropriate use of Year 7 catch-up funding is enabling those pupils who qualify for this funding to progress rapidly with their reading.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons and their needs are catered for well, enabling them to access the curriculum.

### 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Leadership of the sixth form is strong and ensures that students follow courses appropriate to their needs. As a result, the retention of students from Year 12 to Year 13 is very high.
- Progress of students on technical and vocational courses is good, which led to improved results in 2017. The attainment of those students on A-level courses in 2017 was similar to 2016, which was below the national average.
- Those students who did not achieve grades 9 to 4 in GCSE English and/or mathematics receive better support to improve their grades during key stage 5 than was the case in the past. In 2016, students made similar progress to other students nationally.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of where there are weaknesses in teaching and they are taking appropriate action to improve the quality further.
- Students have leadership opportunities in the sixth form, for example through leading the school council and providing support to younger pupils who require additional support in their learning.
- The curriculum is delivered jointly with the adjoining boys' school. This enables a wider range of courses to be offered. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form but on occasions the communication between the two schools could be better. This leads to students being frustrated by changes which they were not informed about.
- Leaders have taken appropriate action to address previous weaknesses in the careers advice and guidance that was of variable quality and did not always support students in having high enough aspirations. Better guidance and support has led to students being on more appropriate courses now. The proportion of students not in employment, education or training is very low.
- No work experience is provided for students in the sixth form, although an enrichment programme is in place. Leaders recognise this as a weakness and are intending to reintroduce work experience.



## School details

Unique reference number	137630
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10038371

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	869
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	121
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Nigel Scott
Headteacher	Dr Fraser Campbell
Telephone number	01634 861596
Website	<a href="http://www.waldersladegirls.org.uk">www.waldersladegirls.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@waldersladegirls.org.uk">office@waldersladegirls.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	March 2014

## Information about this school

- The headteacher is new to post, having only started permanently in September 2017.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is a smaller than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small percentage of the pupils do



not speak English as their first language.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is similar to the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- Off-site provision at the Knole Ward, Cygnet Hospital Godden Green is used by the school.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection started out as a short inspection of a good school under section 8 of the Education Act, 2005. It converted to a full section 5 inspection on day one so that the team could be expanded in order to gather further evidence.
- Inspectors observed learning in 38 lessons, including a number of short visits to classrooms, tutor rooms and assemblies. Several lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. During visits to classes, inspectors looked at pupils' work in books.
- Inspectors also examined a selection of pupils' work from key stages 3 and 4.
- Meetings were held with staff, including newly qualified teachers, academic senior and middle leaders, and a group of governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 44 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as written comments submitted by 36 parents, three comments received from parents during the inspection and the school's own parental questionnaire.
- Pupils' views were gathered from meetings with groups of pupils from Years 7 to 11, the sixth form and from the school's own pupil questionnaire. Informal conversations with pupils took place around the school site.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation. This included leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, the school's plans for improvement, information about standards and pupils' progress, the school's website, records of behaviour and attendance, and a range of policies and information including those relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Christopher Lee, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Bauckham	Ofsted Inspector
Scott Norman	Ofsted Inspector
Adam Mirams	Ofsted Inspector
Harry Ingham	Ofsted Inspector

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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. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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