

Woolwich Polytechnic School

Hutchins Road, Thamesmead, London SE28 8AT

Inspection dates

30–31 January 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and teachers work relentlessly to provide exceptional support for the personal development of their pupils. The school provides a safe place where pupils develop and learn. They receive help to overcome challenges in their own lives and to succeed.
- The sixth form is outstanding, because students' outcomes are very strong and the quality of teaching is consistently high. Leaders guide students onto appropriate courses and track their progress carefully. Teachers give timely support for pupils who fall behind with their work.
- Leaders set very high standards for pupils' behaviour and achievement. Pupils respond well to these expectations. Behaviour around the school is exemplary. Pupils welcome visitors and the opportunity to demonstrate their pride in the school.
- Pupils thrive through taking on responsibilities, such as being prefects. Pupils relish the opportunity to support their peers and contribute to the smooth running of the school.
- Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. Outstanding leadership ensures high-quality support and training for teachers, so that improvements are made swiftly. There remains some variability in the quality of teaching, particularly in key stages 3 and 4.
- Leaders track pupils' progress carefully and have an extensive range of interventions to help pupils who are falling behind. However, some pupils do not benefit from these as well as they should. Some older pupils do not receive the support they need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Overall, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils and most-able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable when they do not receive the right levels of challenge and support.
- There is a wide curriculum which prepares pupils very well for life in modern Britain.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information effectively, so that pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and the most able, receive the support and challenge they need to make good progress.
- Improve outcomes by:
 - developing a systematic approach to ensuring that all pupils, and especially those in Year 9 and Year 10, receive the support they need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills
 - using leaders' evaluation of the impact of interventions to ensure that pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, receive equally strong support across all year groups, enabling them to make better progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Senior leaders enable staff to develop valuable leadership skills. As a result, shared leadership across all aspects of the school is very strong.
- Leaders set exceptionally high standards for pupils' behaviour. The leadership of pastoral support is a strength of the school. Year leaders place top priority on enabling pupils to achieve their best. They ensure that pupils with difficulties in their learning are given substantial support and encouragement to overcome these challenges. Pupils are highly ambitious, because of this culture set by leaders. Pupils take on a range of responsibilities, which they take very seriously, developing very effective leadership skills.
- The leadership of pupils' personal development and welfare is a remarkable strength in the school. Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to gain information and guidance about how to develop successful attitudes and skills for the world of work. There is a huge range of support for pupils, especially those with difficulties in their personal life. There is an exceptional ethos of care across the school and pupils view the school as their family.
- There is a very wide programme of training for all teachers and many opportunities for teachers' leadership development. Teachers at all levels, including newly qualified teachers, speak very highly of this training and the opportunities to gain leadership skills. The large majority of staff who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire said they value this training highly.
- There is an extensive programme of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development for pupils. For example, pupils have opportunities to debate topical issues, they are involved in local charities, and they campaign on issues such as recycling. There is very strong support for pupils to develop positive attitudes and behaviours. Pupils' attendance is above national averages, because of the actions of pastoral leaders. Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders use additional funding effectively to support groups of pupils. A wide range of initiatives support disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Leaders' careful review of the impact of specific interventions means that they have an accurate understanding of what is working well. They have recently re-evaluated the use of their Year 7 numeracy and literacy catch-up funding, because they believe the literacy funding was not used well last year.
- There is a broad curriculum, across the school. In key stages 3 and 4, there is a range of courses for pupils with different development needs. However, some pupils do not receive the support they need to continue successfully with all their subject choices. As a result, they drop subjects, which limits choices for them later in their education.

Governance of the school

- Governors are a real strength of the school. They are conscientious and constantly strive to improve their effectiveness in supporting and challenging leaders by:

- viewing their safeguarding responsibilities seriously and meeting with pupils to check that they feel safe
- challenging leaders over pupils' standards
- working with the pastoral team to maintain the high level of pupils' behaviour
- providing support for checking school budgets
- auditing their skills and using external trainers to support them in identifying and filling any gaps in their knowledge and skills.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff who maintain the checks and records of all employees are very knowledgeable and use their skills to keep accurate records which are fully compliant with all statutory requirements.
- Leaders are trained effectively in safeguarding. There is a very strong culture across the school, where staff are very well informed about local risks and are vigilant in helping pupils to avoid these risks. Leaders ensure that all staff know and understand how to keep all their pupils safe, particularly pupils who are most at risk.
- Staff show great care and attention to pupils with medical needs. They also ensure that the numerous trips for pupils are carefully assessed for risks.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. Relationships are strong between teachers and pupils. Pupils enjoy their learning and are keen to do well in all their subjects.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan exciting lessons which motivate and inspire their pupils. This is particularly strong in the sixth form, where teachers set students very challenging tasks to deepen and develop their learning.
- Pupils work well with each other and often give their peers effective feedback on how to improve their work. Teachers help pupils to improve their knowledge, skills and understanding by questioning them effectively. Pupils are proud of their work and are keen to share their progress.
- Teachers' regular assessment of pupils' subject knowledge enables pupils to recognise ways in which to improve their work. However, pupils sometimes do not act on this guidance and some of the least able pupils have gaps in their understanding because of this.
- In the sixth form, students from all ability levels are challenged in lessons, and outcomes for these students are very strong. In key stage 3 and 4, some pupils, especially the most able and disadvantaged pupils, are not challenged in all subjects and as a result make less progress than they are capable of in these subjects.
- In key stage 3, teachers sometimes plan lessons on topics that pupils learn about in primary school. Teachers are not using pupils' prior learning effectively. Pupils,

especially the most able pupils, find learning in these lessons too easy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are very articulate, unfailingly polite and confident with adults. They enjoy the numerous opportunities for leadership through the school council and prefect system. All pupils are very proud of their school and their uniform is immaculate.
- Pupils are supported in developing their own learning skills through a very extensive extended schools programme. This programme runs before and after school, at weekends and in the holidays. Pupils who need support in moving from primary school to Woolwich Polytechnic School attend this programme. Pupils from all year groups are encouraged to attend when they fall behind with their work. The most able pupils are also offered sessions to stretch and challenge their thinking. Pupils speak very highly of this support from their teachers.
- Pupils receive very effective careers advice and guidance. Key workers provide personalised support for pupils with SEND on the next steps when they leave school. Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain very well.
- There is an exceptionally good system of pastoral support for pupils. Pupils know where to go for help and hugely appreciate the time and effort that teachers give to them. All pupils who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire said they feel safe in the school. They also said that teachers deal with the few instances of bullying very effectively.
- The school also makes a valuable contribution to supporting pupils in other local schools. Pupils learn how to keep safe and to avoid local risks such as belonging to gangs.
- Pupils are encouraged to make healthy choices about their eating and exercise. Teachers give strong support to pupils in developing their well-being, including mental health. There is a counselling service in the school, which supports pupils with personal problems.
- In discussions, pupils respect the views of others. There is a personal development programme which helps pupils to understand ethics, beliefs and other cultures. Pupils are also taught how to be responsible citizens and to understand democracy. These lessons are linked to the school values of 'Be ready, be respectful, be safe.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is carefully supported through all aspects of the curriculum.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance is in line with the national average for all pupils, while the attendance of pupils with

SEND is improving rapidly.

- Exclusions, which were high in the past, have reduced by 50% in the past year because of leaders' new policies and practice. Leaders ensure that pupils receive the right support to reflect on their poor behaviour and to improve.
- Pastoral leaders have a thorough understanding of the behaviour issues of all the pupils in their care. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. Pupils manage their own behaviour in public spaces, whether adults are present or not. Pupils are very self-critical of poor behaviour, especially in lessons, and they expect very high standards from each other. The pupils are an absolute credit to the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Students' progress in the sixth form is very strong because of the high-quality teaching they experience. In GCSE examinations in 2017 and 2018, Year 11 pupils achieved grades which were above the national averages.
- There is overall an upward trend in pupils' progress in key stage 4. Pupils' progress from their starting points in Year 7 to the end of Year 11 in 2017 was below that of other pupils nationally. In 2018 pupils' progress was broadly average when compared with national figures.
- Overall, pupils make good progress across most subjects. Leaders monitor pupils' achievements very closely and ensure that teachers give additional help to pupils who are falling behind. However, specific support for some groups of pupils is not effective. There is some variation in how well pupils achieve in different key stages and across groups of pupils. For example, disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils make less progress than other pupils.
- Some teachers do not ensure that pupils act on advice on how to improve their work. As a result, some pupils do not fulfil their potential.
- In some lessons, pupils repeat learning from key stage 2. The most able pupils find this work too easy and they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils with SEND make progress, because the courses they follow are appropriate and there are a range of alternative pathways to suit their individual needs. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress.
- The school uses several programmes to improve pupils' reading ability. There are slight improvements with the least able pupils because of these interventions.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- The quality of teaching and learning in most lessons in the sixth form is very high. Teachers pay close attention to individual students' progress. Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength across all subjects. Students make outstanding progress.
- Leaders set high expectations for their students. Subject areas where pupils performed less well in 2018 examinations were scrutinised and additional support for teachers and students was promptly put in place. These subject areas have rapidly improved.
- The personal development and welfare of students are exceptional. Students are

supported in their subject choices. They are given an induction to the sixth form and very strong support for higher education and employment. There is very effective careers advice and guidance, with input from business and a range of employers.

- Leaders ensure that students know how to keep safe and to avoid risks in the local community. Teachers mentor students against the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Students are supported to develop strong mental and physical health and they are very appreciative of the support teachers give them.
- Outcomes and progress for students in the sixth form are outstanding both for current students and those who studied A levels and vocational subjects in the past three years. Subject leaders are relentless in tracking students and giving extra support when needed.
- Leadership and management in the sixth form are outstanding, with real ambition and care for all students. Retention of students is very high because of this ethos of care. Many students go on to university, with a high number attending Russell Group Universities.
- Students' attendance is very good. They are proud of their school and enjoy the leadership opportunities when they can help younger pupils. For example, they lead assemblies for younger pupils to support their moral development

School details

Unique reference number	141163
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	10059004

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 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1516
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	340
Appropriate authority	The governing body and the Board of Trustees
Chair	Bob Janes
Headteachers	Byron Parker and Tim Plumb
Telephone number	02083107000
Website	http://woolwichpoly.co.uk/
Email address	arendell@woolwichpoly.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Monitoring visit 27 September 2016

Information about this school

- There are two co-headteachers. One headteacher works part time for an external organisation.
- The school converted to academy status on 6 August 2014. The school is now part of PolyMAT, a multi academy trust. The other school in the trust is planned to open in September 2019. This will be a girls' school on an adjacent site.
- The trust revised the delegation of powers to the school's local governing body in January 2019. The local governing body has strategic leadership of most management

functions in the school. The trust retains overall responsibility for finance, targets and policies.

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in key stages 3 and 4, in the sixth form and across a range of subjects. They visited two school meetings where pupils' progress was tracked and tutor time. Inspectors carried out checks on pupils' books and talked to pupils about their work.
- Inspectors met with pupils, teachers, middle and senior leaders and governors and spoke to representatives from the local authority. Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents relating to: pupils' behaviour; safety; teaching and learning; and pupils' progress and attainment.
- There were four responses from parents, 41 responses from pupils and 65 responses from staff to the Ofsted online questionnaires.
- In several lessons, pupils were sitting tests. Inspectors reviewed their books where this was possible.

Inspection team

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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.

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