

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: South Wilts Grammar School

Stratford Road, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 3JJ

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 January 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are exceptionally proud to belong to this welcoming and vibrant school. The school has high expectations of all pupils; pupils meet and exceed these expectations. This is reflected both in the school's exceptional academic outcomes and in the way that pupils, and students in the sixth form, conduct themselves. They show high levels of respect for one another. The school's values of 'be kind, be involved, be aspirational' are demonstrated by all members of the school community.

Pupils in Years 7 to 11 study a broad range of subjects. The school offers a wide range of A levels in the growing sixth form. Pupils are intellectually curious and develop a deep understanding of their subjects. Many pupils are enthusiastic readers. The school ensures that all pupils, including students in the sixth form, read widely and often.

Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and trusting. Pupils feel happy and safe. Alongside a rigorous academic curriculum, pupils enjoy a plethora of extra-curricular activities, including successful sports teams, music ensembles, book clubs, and clubs for pupils who enjoy art, fantasy games, languages and gardening. Leadership opportunities abound. Pupils learn to be active citizens through their participation in the school's work to promote equality, diversity, inclusion and sustainability.

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

The school has designed an exceptionally ambitious curriculum. Pupils study a broad range of subjects at key stage 3 and are well supported when choosing which subjects to take at GCSE and A Level. The school is responsive to pupils' views on the curriculum. For example, students in the sixth form can now choose to study sociology and environmental

science. Sixth form students study courses that are well matched to their future aspirations.

Staff demonstrate excellent subject and pedagogical knowledge. They check pupils' understanding effectively, addressing misconceptions and inaccuracies in pupils' work. As a result, pupils, including students in the sixth form, build detailed knowledge over time, making connections within and between subjects. Their learning often extends beyond the planned curriculum because staff skilfully spark pupils' intellectual curiosity. Pupils also develop the skills needed to perform well in subjects with practical elements, such as music and science. Pupils enjoy their learning and produce work of a high standard.

Pupils enjoy reviewing and recommending books for their peers. Students in the sixth form continue to develop an appreciation of literature, regardless of the subjects they are taking. There is a palpable 'buzz' around reading at the school. The curriculum is often enriched with trips and visiting speakers. Pupils have many opportunities to attend talks which inform them about possible careers in different subject areas.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. The school identifies pupils' needs and puts appropriate support in place. The school provides staff with extensive training to ensure that they successfully adapt and refine the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils. In addition, while pupils arrive with higher-than-average starting points, the school supports pupils who need additional help with reading and spelling when needed.

When students join the sixth form from other schools, they quickly become part of the 'SWGS' community. Most students in the sixth form complete additional courses such as the Extended Project Qualification. Alongside volunteering, leading clubs for younger pupils and taking on positions of responsibility such as prefects, students value the school's support and encouragement to participate in activities outside of school, such as the Wiltshire Youth Council. Working with staff, student leaders help shape changes at the school. As a result, they are well prepared for their next steps, including when applying to academically selective universities.

The school's 'Live Well' curriculum ensures that pupils learn important information about healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe online. In addition, pupils describe how much they enjoy the extended time to explore topics such as the importance of sleep and how to look after their mental health. They value opportunities to just 'have fun'. Pupils learn about the fundamental British values. For example, the school ran a mock election to support pupils' understanding of democracy. Pupils receive detailed and varied information about careers, including apprenticeships. The school's work to develop pupils' character and understanding of the world is remarkable. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, and they have highly positive attitudes towards school.

Staff are united in their passion and dedication to the school. Leaders, including trustees, empower them to do their jobs effectively and are committed to their professional development. This has a positive impact on pupils. Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences both in the classroom and beyond.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in October 2019.

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	136391
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10344594
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	1184
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	388
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Elizabeth Anne Ogilvie
Headteacher	Dr Amanda Smith
Website	www.swgs.wilts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Pupils join the school having taken the 11+ examination.
- Since the previous inspection, the school's sixth form has changed and is now mixed gender.
- 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 does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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, other senior leaders from the school and a selection of staff during the inspection. The lead inspector met with the chair and other members of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors analysed responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the responses of staff and pupils to Ofsted's online surveys.
- An inspector discussed how the school identifies and supports pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils during lessons and social times. They met with staff who oversee the personal development and behaviour of pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.

Inspection team

Victoria Griffin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jenny Maraspin

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Ofsted Inspector

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