

# Inspection of Walderslade Girls' School

Bradfields Avenue, Walderslade, Chatham, Kent ME5 0LE

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Inspection dates: 22 and 23 February 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Inadequate**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Sixth-form provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Too many staff and pupils feel unsafe in this school. They have been affected by the continued violent and discriminatory behaviours of a number of pupils. This happens most often in the corridors between lessons and at social times. Pupils in all year groups report being 'shoved' and verbally abused during these times.

The newly acting headteacher has taken actions to reduce the most significantly poor behaviour. However, these have not yet had a strong enough impact. Many pupils feel that the approach to managing behaviour is unfair. They say that they rarely report concerns as they have little confidence that effective action will be taken. As a result, bullying and the use of derogatory language are experienced by too many pupils. Expectations for all are not yet high enough as leaders focus on managing the most challenging behaviours of some pupils.

Pupils learn about fundamental British values, diversity and culture through the school's 'Skills for Life' programme. Leaders deliver assemblies to tackle issues such as racism and discrimination. However, these are not yet effective enough to ensure that all pupils show tolerance and respect for one another.

Pupils come together to enjoy the performing arts. For example, they work well and cooperate across year groups in preparation for the 'Peter Pan' production. There are some clubs and community activities such as netball and litter picking on offer, although attendance is low, and leaders do not currently check that those who would benefit the most attend. Leaders have ensured that there is a well-planned and comprehensive careers programme, including for students in the sixth form. Pupils are well prepared to make decisions about their next steps in education, employment or training.

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

Pupils study a broad range of subjects, including in the sixth form. The planned curriculum in most subjects is ambitious and in line with the aims of the national curriculum. However, pupils do not experience the full breadth of the intended curriculum in all subjects at key stage 3. Too few pupils achieve the English Baccalaureate in Year 11. Leaders are taking action to address this by increasing the uptake of languages; however, there is still much work to be done. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have access to the same curriculum as their peers.

Curriculum plans are not consistently well considered or sequenced in all subjects. This means that pupils do not always embed knowledge securely over time in some subjects. The quality of teaching and assessment is inconsistent across the curriculum. Where teaching is adapted to the needs of pupils and well-chosen resources are used, pupils engage and achieve well. For example, in science, pupils in Year 7 use paired discussion effectively to explore the role of genetics in their physical similarities and differences. However, in too many subjects, pupils

frequently experience changes in teaching staff. This means that they do not always learn knowledge in a logical order, and misconceptions are not addressed swiftly enough.

Most teachers re-cap previous learning to check pupils' understanding. However, some do not always check that pupils have completed work or ensure that time is given to go back and fill in any gaps. Leaders do not always identify the needs of pupils with SEND swiftly. Teachers do not know the needs of pupils with SEND well. These pupils do not receive the support and adaptations that they are entitled to so that they can achieve as well as they should.

Behaviour in lessons is more positive. Although there is some low-level disruption that is not always addressed swiftly, many pupils want to work hard and talk enthusiastically about their studies. For example, pupils in Year 11 explained in detail the causes of the Cold War. Psychology students in the sixth form discuss 'what is normal?' with confidence. However, expectations for learning are sometimes too low. Many pupils take little pride in the presentation of their work and leave tasks unfinished.

Leaders do not currently have a plan for improving reading in the school. Pupils with SEND, and those who may find it more difficult to read, do not receive specific reading intervention to enable them to access the curriculum more fully.

Students in the sixth form have the opportunity to study a range of qualifications. However, a significant number continue to follow level 2 courses. While this is suitable for some students, it may limit future choices for others. Students in the sixth form benefit from specialist teachers who engage and develop students using appropriate lesson resources. Leaders have not yet ensured that students have sufficient opportunity to enrich their sixth-form experiences further through a coordinated enrichment programme.

A significant number of pupils, including those who are vulnerable, do not come to school often enough. This has not been addressed robustly by leaders in the past. Newly appointed leaders have taken more-recent actions to improve pupil attendance, although this will take some time to have a strong enough impact.

The personal, social and health education programme is well sequenced so that pupils revisit learning about issues such as consent, inclusivity and healthy relationships in an age-appropriate way. However, too many pupils do not reflect this learning in their interactions with others. Leaders have worked hard to increase capacity for mental health and pastoral support across the school.

While governors have raised concerns about the weaknesses in the school, trustees are only beginning to fully understand the extent of improvements that are needed. They have not previously taken the necessary steps to prevent the decline in behaviour and standards. The newly appointed acting headteacher has engaged well with staff, pupils and parents to understand their views. She has a clear oversight of what needs to be done and has begun to implement change. However, the acting

headteacher does not currently have the capacity, or an experienced team, to take the swift and decisive actions that are urgently needed.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Senior leaders do not have a clear oversight of roles and responsibilities for safeguarding. They do not have a sufficient understanding of the indicators of risk and when pupils may need external support to help them stay safe. Therefore, they do not always act urgently to refer pupils to appropriate agencies in line with guidance.

Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 report that they are at risk of verbal and physical abuse. The significant majority of pupils, and some staff, say that they feel unsafe in school.

Leaders make the necessary checks so that all adults are safe to work in the school. Pupils learn about consent and how to keep themselves safe online through the curriculum.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders do not have a clear oversight of who is responsible for safeguarding and do not ensure that risk is appropriately identified, leading to inaction in making necessary referrals. This means that pupils do not always get the necessary help and support that they urgently need. Leaders need to ensure that roles and responsibilities for safeguarding are clearly defined and that leaders know the thresholds for making referrals, so that they act swiftly when concerns arise.
- Some groups of pupils, including those who are vulnerable, miss too much school. Recent actions taken by leaders have only just begun to address this. Leaders need to remain sharply focused on the impact of newly implemented strategies, so that attendance rates for all are swiftly improved.
- Expectations are not high enough to prevent the rise in significantly poor behaviour in the school. A number of approaches to managing the most serious behaviours, including discriminatory attitudes, have been confusing for staff. Therefore, they have not been consistently applied by all. This means that many pupils and some staff feel unsafe due to ongoing violent behaviour that affects the school and local community. Trustees and governors should ensure that leaders have the capacity that they need to review their approach, and provide necessary training for staff, so that a more consistent and robust approach to improving behaviour is quickly adopted across the school.
- The needs of pupils with SEND have not been accurately identified, assessed or met. Therefore, pupils with SEND do not benefit from a good-quality education. Leaders need to rapidly act on the plans that they have recently put in place to

ensure that pupils with SEND receive the statutory support that they are entitled to.

- The curriculum is in varying stages of development and, in some subjects, is not sequentially or logically planned. This means that pupils learn content in a disjointed way, finding it difficult to make connections between learning. Leaders need to sharpen their oversight of curriculum planning to ensure that pupils build on knowledge securely and sequentially over time, in all subjects.
- Leaders have not implemented a systematic and coordinated approach to identifying the weakest readers. This means that pupils who need the most support do not get the help that they need to improve and to access the curriculum fully. Leaders must ensure that systems are put in place to identify, monitor and provide intervention for those who need further support to read well.
- Having considered the evidence, we strongly recommend that leaders and those responsible for governance do not seek to appoint early career teachers.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137630
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	10276750
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Modern (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	771
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	117
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Tom Maddison
<b>Headteacher</b>	Louise Hardie
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sflt.org.uk/waldersladegirls">www.sflt.org.uk/waldersladegirls</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3 and 4 December 2019 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- At the time of the inspection the headteacher was absent. The school was being led by an acting headteacher.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses alternative provision from two registered providers.
- The school is part of the Skills for Life Trust. The school shares a sixth form with Greenacre Academy.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- The school began as an urgent inspection and was carried out with 15 minutes' notice. The inspection was deemed as a graded inspection because of concerns about behaviour and safeguarding.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team completed deep dives in English, mathematics, science, performing arts and history. To do this, they met with subject leaders, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, a selection of subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with trustees, including the chief executive officer and the chair of the trust. They also met with the vice-chair of the governing body.
- The inspection team reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising records and through discussions with staff and pupils.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions and a review of Ofsted's parent survey.

## Inspection team

Zoë Harris, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Alice Roberts	His Majesty's Inspector
Mary McKeeman	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Bzikot	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
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