

Inspection of The Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe

Amersham Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP13 6QT

Inspection dates: 9–10 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils benefit hugely from the exceptional, co-curricular extra experiences provided. They broaden their horizons, nurture their talents and strengthen their leadership skills. Many additional activities are led by members of the sixth form. Sixth-form students make a significant contribution to school life and achieve highly in the subjects they study.

Pupils try hard, engaging fully with their learning. This is because leaders have high expectations of pupils' commitment to the school's values. Pupils relish the topics they study and appreciate their teachers' enthusiasm for their subject. One pupil summed this up by saying, 'Teachers are passionate and know their subject and are not just here for a job.' Pupils also gain work-related skills through the 'Ethos of Learning' strand that is threaded through the curriculum.

Pupils take a broad range of subjects, most of which are academic. Teachers support pupils well, developing them as individuals and providing them with extra help. In some but not all subjects, pupils gain profound subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding over time.

Pupils consistently show high levels of respect for each other, their teachers and those in communities beyond the school. Bullying is very rare. Pupils feel safe and well cared for.

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

The headteacher, together with leaders, has improved some aspects of the school. The atmosphere throughout the school is very positive. Teachers and pupils get on well with each other. Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. Pupils' attendance has risen.

Leaders have introduced firmer approaches to managing pupils' conduct. These have led to improvements in pupils' behaviour. Pupils commented to inspectors that teachers consistently apply new approaches. Around school, and in class, pupils' behaviour is excellent.

Senior leaders oversee subjects well. They check on how well pupils achieve in examinations. Senior leaders and subject leaders have worked together to develop the curriculum further. They have introduced some new qualifications. For example, GCSE English Literature has replaced the IGCSE qualification. Senior leaders do not share a deep understanding of how best to develop a highly ambitious curriculum. As a result, there is some inconsistency. For example, the curriculum in science and history is very well designed. Pupils apply their subject expertise well when they encounter new, more complex concepts. In some other subjects, however, the curriculum does not enable pupils to fully master important subject-related concepts.

Teaching across the school is generally strong. It supports pupils very well in preparing for examinations. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to refine their examinations techniques. While pupils' attainment in most subjects is high, in some subjects teaching does not always enable pupils to gain deep insights into the subject. This sometimes limits how well pupils apply their knowledge. Senior leaders have put together a programme of training about the curriculum and teaching. It does not focus enough on those aspects that most need developing.

The school has introduced new approaches to reading for pleasure. These include online quizzes and extra reading lessons. Leaders are checking whether the new approaches are working. They recognise that some need further development. For example, pupils do not always choose books that are challenging enough.

Leaders have strengthened the sixth form. Students do well in their A-level examinations. They enjoy their studies and supplement their learning in class with extra reading. Students receive visits from experts and take part in academic competitions. When they join the sixth form, students can discover where their interests lie. Leaders ensure that students receive effective careers advice. The vast majority of students go on to university. A considerable proportion achieve places at top universities.

Governance is effective. Governors have a detailed overview of pupils' achievement in external examinations. They check how well pupils are achieving in different subjects and year groups. Governors keep an eye on how many pupils take part in co-curricular activities. Minutes from meetings show that they are not complacent. Governors have started to ask more probing questions about the quality of the curriculum. Their focus on the curriculum is new and they are developing their capabilities in this area.

Leaders have developed an extensive personal development programme. It complements the work-related skills that teachers introduce within lessons. The programme focuses on well-being and safety. It enables pupils to understand the dangers of the internet. It also helps them to see the risks involved in some online games. The school's excellent local community and international links enhance pupils' cultural knowledge. These connections also have a strong spiritual dimension. They help pupils empathise with others.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has strong expertise in all aspects of safeguarding. She uses her knowledge very well when assessing levels of risk and deciding on appropriate next steps. She keeps a very close watch on the way that the local authority responds to any referrals she makes. Where necessary, she requests that it provides additional support.

Staff training is extensive. It includes those issues that are most relevant to the school. To support staff in remembering key messages, the DSL uses meaningful real-life scenarios.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school provides extensive staff training and development. Senior leaders need to ensure that planned training on the curriculum is carefully thought through and sharply focused. It should include suitable approaches for further developing reading for pleasure.
- Leaders need to develop a deeper, more nuanced understanding of how to design and implement a highly ambitious curriculum. They should use their enhanced understanding to ensure that the excellence found in some areas of the curriculum is consistent across all.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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

Unique reference number	136484
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10085500
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,400
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	398
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mr Steve Ashton
Headteacher	Mr Philip Wayne
Website	www.rgshw.com
Date of previous inspection	13 November 2008

Information about this school

- The Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe converted to become a stand-alone academy on 1 February 2011. When its predecessor school, The Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe, was inspected in November 2008, it was to be judged outstanding overall.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher was appointed on 1 September 2015 and a new chair of the governing body was appointed shortly before that.
- The school provides boarding accommodation for up to 70 pupils aged 11 to 18, which is overseen by the governing body.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- An inspection of the boarding provision took place at the same time as the school inspection. A separate inspection report for the boarding provision will be published.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher on two occasions. They also met separately with two groups of subject leaders, the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, leaders responsible for behaviour and attendance, leaders responsible for the co-curricular offer, the leader for literacy across the curriculum, and the pastoral leader for Year 7. They held meetings with the sixth-form leader and also met sixth-form students on two occasions, once informally at breaktime and once in a small group.
- Inspectors observed pupils during breaktime and were given a tour of the school by the head boy. Inspectors also met with a range of staff on a one-to-one basis, including newly qualified teachers and support staff. They met with a group of trainee teachers and also held meetings with three different groups of pupils. Inspectors met with members of the governing body, twice, and made a phone call to the chair of the governing body.
- As part of their inspection of safeguarding, inspectors held a separate meeting attended by the social care inspector, as well as the school’s DSL and the DSL for the boarding provision. Inspectors looked at records of the checks made on staff when they are appointed and other safeguarding records, including referrals to the local authority.
- During this inspection, inspectors focused deeply on English, music, art, mathematics, science and history. They visited classes, met with leaders (including subject leaders), and met separately with pupils and class teachers. Inspectors looked at pupils’ work. Inspectors also held separate meetings with 10 other subject leaders to discuss their curriculum plans.
- Inspectors considered the 403 responses parents made to the online survey, Parent View, and an email from a parent. They also reviewed the school’s improvement and development plans.

Inspection team

Sarah Hubbard, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
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Mark Roessler	Ofsted Inspector

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