

Inspection of an outstanding school: Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School

Woods Avenue, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL10 8NL

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 December 2022

Outcome

Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love attending Bishop's Hatfield and are proud to be part of the inclusive and respectful community. Bullying is very rare, and dealt with effectively by staff if it happens. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. From lessons to social time, the atmosphere is consistently calm and welcoming.

The girls are expertly supported to reach their potential through an ambitious and engaging curriculum, from Year 7 to sixth form. Pupils are excited by their lessons. They actively participate and show high levels of resilience. They discuss what they learn with eagerness and interest, and achieve leaders' high expectations of them.

Pupils are happy and safe in school. They speak passionately about the care and support they receive from staff. This goes beyond the academic. One student's view, echoed by many, is, 'Teachers love to see us develop and grow.'

Pupils leave as well-rounded individuals. They relish the opportunity to embody 'Bishop's 360 values', which include kindness, ambition and teamwork. Pupils flourish, and support each other to succeed. They excel academically and in wider activities, such as house competition and leadership roles. Older students are fully involved in school life and relish the opportunity to build their character, for example through community service.

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

Leaders are highly ambitious for all pupils and sixth-form students. Careful planning of what will be taught – and in what order – has resulted in an ambitious curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils.

Leaders have ensured that staff have a clear and shared understanding of what excellent progress through the curriculum looks like. They check that the curriculum is being delivered as intended. There is very little low-level disruption, which means pupils learn well.

Teachers are experts in the subjects that they teach. They collaborate well within their faculties to produce high-quality resources. This has contributed to lessons of exceptional quality that result in pupils achieving highly.

Teachers use assessment purposefully to check what pupils know and understand, and to help pupils remember key information. Teachers are skilled at adapting their teaching so that all pupils' needs are catered for. For example, in science, teachers carefully pose questions to pupils depending on their need. They immediately address any misconceptions and skilfully connect current learning to prior learning. This allows pupils to achieve success and deepen their understanding.

Pupils, including in the sixth form, are very complimentary about the feedback they receive from teachers. They have a clear understanding of how they are faring and are given the skills and strategies to improve.

Leaders have ensured that a reading culture is championed across the school. Pupils read fluently because they are explicitly taught how to do so. Teachers use effective methods to help pupils learn key vocabulary. They model reading with expression and expect pupils to read aloud, supporting them to do so. Pupils animatedly discuss their thoughts and views on books – such as whether they have empathy for characters in 'Of Mice and Men' or whether murder mystery is a more exciting genre than fantasy. Pupils who are less confident readers are quickly identified and supported to rapidly improve. Expert staff deliver high-quality intervention sessions which support pupils to make swift progress in developing reading fluency.

Pupils and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from a high-quality education. Their needs are quickly identified, and appropriate support is put in place. All staff have access to inclusion plans which clearly outline how to meet pupils' needs. Staff are trained to utilise this information and make appropriate adaptations to their teaching. This ensures pupils with SEND make excellent progress from their starting points.

Leaders have ensured the wider curriculum offer to support pupils' broader development is exceptional. There is a large array of extremely popular clubs, which cover a wide range of skills and interests. Examples include netball, crochet, Duke of Edinburgh's Award and 'The Club That Shall Not Be Named'. Pupils are animated in their enthusiasm for all of these.

Pupils have a strong voice in school as a result of numerous leadership opportunities. These have a meaningful impact on pupils' values and the highly positive culture. The Equality and Diversity group members have educated their peers around microaggressions. Year 10 linguists support primary pupils to learn languages. In sixth form, students carry out community service. All of this is further supported by an effective 'life skills' programme that teaches pupils to learn how to be safe and healthy citizens.

Senior leaders, including governors, hold leaders to account. They ensure appropriate challenge and support is in place throughout the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture. Staff have been appropriately trained. They are confident about recognising signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm, and report concerns promptly.

Safeguarding leads maintain well-kept records and meet regularly regarding individual pupils whom they have concerns about. Leaders work closely with external agencies and make sure that pupils receive support when they need it. Students in the sixth form are supported with individual tutorials. Pupils learn about risks relating to sexual harassment and online safety, and how to stay safe.

Appropriate safer recruitment processes are in place.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 outstanding in February 2016.

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

Unique reference number	137757
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10211912
Type of school	Secondary
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	930
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew North
Headteacher	Alf Wood
Website	www.bishophatfield.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	9 and 10 February 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school currently makes use of three registered alternative providers.
- The sixth form is part of the Welwyn & Hatfield Consortium, which comprises of five schools: Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School, Monk's Walk, Onslow St Audrey's, Ridgeway Academy and Stanborough.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, geography and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with

subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the science curriculum and visited science lessons.
- As part of the work to inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, the school's safeguarding policy and the single central record of pre-employment checks. They spoke with safeguarding leads and with pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation during the inspection, including curriculum plans, school development plans and safeguarding and behaviour records.
- Inspectors also spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school. The behaviour of pupils was observed across the school site.
- Inspectors met with governors.
- Inspectors reviewed the 159 responses that were submitted by parents and carers to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and 107 free-text responses submitted during the inspection. Inspectors also considered the 71 responses to the staff survey and 193 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Bessie Owen, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jim McAtear

Ofsted Inspector

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