

Newlands Girls' School

Farm Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 5JB

Inspection dates

9–10 October 2018

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. Supported by the leadership team, she has realised her vision of an excellent education for all pupils.
- Teachers plan high-quality activities that meet the needs of all pupils, in particular the most able. Consequently, pupils' progress is exceptional by the end of key stage 4.
- Pupils in all year groups make excellent progress. In English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, humanities and science pupils' progress is well above average.
- Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. Pupils are polite, well mannered and respectful. This results in a harmonious atmosphere in lessons and around school.
- The rich curriculum is tailored to pupils' needs and ambitions. Pupils choose from a wide range of subjects in key stages 3, 4 and 5.
- Pupils are very well cared for. Excellent pastoral support ensures that pupils feel safe.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. However, pupils in the main school and sixth-form students would like more frequent careers advice.
- Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress, both because of teaching that is well matched to their needs, and the effective use of extra funding.
- Governors are experienced and knowledgeable. They hold leaders to account well. Through regular visits to the school, governors have a deep understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Sixth-form students make good progress, although it is not as rapid as that in the main school. The curriculum is equally strong, but teaching is not as universally effective. Leaders are taking action to address this.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve careers education so that pupils and students are very well informed about the options available to them in the next stages of their education.
- Improve teaching for students in the sixth form to raise standards of achievement to match the rest of the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher has led the school with determination and relentless ambition. She is ably supported by committed leaders who share her insistence on providing an excellent education. As a result, pupils thrive and make exceptional progress in key stages 3 and 4.
- Leaders have a deep and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They intervene swiftly in subjects where standards are not as high as in other departments. Leaders are stringent in holding heads of department to account. Leaders provide high-quality support when it is needed. Because of this, standards are improving quickly in those departments that have not performed as well as others.
- Leaders and governors think carefully about the intent of the curriculum. Their primary ambition is to provide a curriculum that inspires pupils to become life-long learners. Consequently, pupils enjoy school. They develop high levels of self-confidence and a purposeful work ethic.
- Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that the school is well led. They appreciate the high-quality teaching that their children receive and agree that they make very good progress. One parent wrote, 'The school has an amazing headteacher and staff who really care about every single girl.' Another parent commented, 'My daughter enjoys school and has been given lots of opportunities to develop both personally and academically.'
- Staff morale is high. Staff have high regard for the support that leaders offer. All staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire agreed that the school is well led and managed. They believe that the training is very effective in helping them improve.
- Teachers are encouraged to be innovative. They feel confident in trying new things in lessons. Teachers are supported by leaders if they choose to improve their own qualifications. For example, several teachers have completed Masters-level qualifications as part of their professional development.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is skilfully threaded through the curriculum. Cultural diversity is celebrated in assemblies. For example, in an assembly for Years 7 and 8, different languages were communicated to pupils through music and dance in celebration of the European Day of Languages.

Governance of the school

- Governors share leaders' high aspirations. Governors have worked closely with leaders to ensure that improvements to teaching in recent years have resulted in high rates of progress and attainment, particularly in key stage 4.
- Governors have a wide range of experience. They provide high levels of challenge to leaders and use school visits to monitor regularly the effect of leaders' actions on standards. For example, each governor is linked to a department so that they can attend department meetings, ask pertinent questions, and provide support.

- Governors ensure that they are well trained. Those who are new to the governing body receive timely support and appropriate training. As a result, governors have a deep understanding of their responsibilities and have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have created a vigilant safeguarding culture. Consequently, staff keep pupils safe and are diligent in identifying signs that pupils may be at risk.
- Leaders ensure that appropriate checks on staff are carried out and recorded efficiently. Safeguarding procedures and processes are well organised.
- Staff receive regular and up-to-date safeguarding training. As a result, staff have a good knowledge of current safeguarding guidance.
- Staff ensure that the school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum provides pupils and students with appropriate resources for keeping themselves safe in the wider community.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers have very high aspirations for pupils. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to ensure that pupils thrive on interesting activities. As a result, pupils make exceptionally strong progress.
- Solid teacher-pupil relationships mean that pupils work confidently and have high levels of resilience. Pupils work through challenging activities with enthusiasm. This leads to a very purposeful and positive atmosphere in lessons.
- Pupils excel in lessons because teachers' planning is well thought through. Teachers plan interesting activities which ensure that pupils focus on their learning. Consequently, pupils make excellent progress across almost all subjects.
- In almost all subjects over time and across year groups, lessons challenge pupils' thinking. In English, mathematics, science, drama and modern foreign languages, teachers use their expert knowledge to inspire pupils. As a result, pupils, and particularly the most able, achieve very well.
- Teachers use questioning very effectively to systematically check understanding and ensure that pupils thoroughly understand lesson content. Pupils respond intelligently to teachers' questions. This shows that pupils think deeply about complex issues in lessons. For example, a Year 7 pupil was able to explain that 'weight depends on gravitational field' when asked about the relationship between weight, mass and gravity.
- Pupils are well prepared for their lessons and build their learning outside of school through challenging homework. They manage their own learning at home independently, and some pupils ask for extra homework so that they can thoroughly understand difficult subject areas.

- Pupils read frequently in school. Literacy is embedded thoroughly and throughout the curriculum so that pupils rapidly increase their vocabularies and fluency of reading as they progress through the year groups. As a result, pupils make substantial progress in their subjects.
- Teachers are quick to act when pupils misunderstand in lessons. Pupils benefit from exceptionally skilful feedback from teachers. This helps them to continually deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects. By the time pupils reach Year 11, they make excellent progress compared to pupils with similar starting points.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils appreciate the caring ethos that permeates the school. They participate fully in school life. Strong relationships between staff and pupils mean that staff know pupils well. Pupils appreciate the high-quality pastoral care. As a result, they feel safe and know who to go to if they need help or support.
- Pupils speak with pride about their school. They are courteous and welcoming to visitors. Pupils were keen to talk to inspectors about their extremely positive opinions regarding their relationships with staff and the nurturing environment in the school. One pupil told an inspector that the school was 'like a big family'.
- Pupils have no concerns about bullying, and staff quickly resolve any friendship issues that arise.
- Many pupils take up leadership positions in school. This contributes to raising pupils' aspirations further. For example, pupils are appointed 'attendance champions', which involves mentoring pupils who need support to help them attend school regularly. Pupils are also enthusiastic about arranging after-school activities.
- Pupils feel safe in school and they know how to keep themselves safe online. Staff ensure that pupils are taught when to report any concerns or worries they might have, and who to go to. Form tutors are adept at supporting pupils. As a result, pupils are very well looked after.
- Careers advice is provided throughout all year groups and, overall, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. However, a small number of pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire commented that they would like more information on future career choices.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are friendly, sociable and polite. They readily welcome visitors and are helpful towards adults.

- Pupils behave extremely well in and around school. They are respectful towards each other and have excellent relationships with staff. Pupils are confident, self-assured learners who relish working hard.
- Pupils display a calm and purposeful attitude to learning in lessons. They focus on what they are learning and on teachers' instructions. As a result, pupils make substantial progress.
- All staff insist upon high standards of behaviour, and they feel well supported by leaders in doing this. Consequently, very few pupils receive fixed-term exclusions, and pupils very rarely disrupt lessons.
- Pupils' attendance is well above the national average. When a pupil's attendance is a concern, staff act swiftly to support them in coming to school regularly. Few pupils are persistently absent.
- During social times, pupils conduct themselves very well. Pupils socialise harmoniously with each other. They respect the outside areas and take care of their school. Pupils wear their uniform with pride and keep the school free from litter.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils' progress throughout key stages 3 and 4 is very strong across all subjects. This is because teaching consistently meets the needs of all pupils. Staff work hard to ensure that every pupil develops a deep understanding of the subjects they study.
- In 2017, pupils' progress at the end of key stage 4 was well above the national average for secondary schools. Published national measures of pupils' progress show that pupils' progress overall and in English and mathematics was in the top 10% of schools nationally.
- According to 2018 provisional information, pupils' progress was again well above the national average for secondary schools. Pupils' achievement was high across a wide range of GCSE subjects.
- The majority of pupils study subjects that allow them to meet the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) threshold. In 2017, pupils' progress in EBacc subjects was well above the national average and in the top 10% of schools nationally. 2018 provisional results indicate that pupils' progress remained very strong in these subjects.
- Current pupils' progress is high compared to pupils with similar starting points. Interesting lessons, a well-planned curriculum and dedicated teachers mean that pupils develop a very positive attitude to learning. As a result, pupils' progress is exceptional across year groups.
- Additional funding is used exceptionally well to ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive well-targeted support. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, significantly outperform disadvantaged pupils across the country.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make strong progress from their starting points. The curriculum is matched closely to their needs, and teaching assistants provide high-quality support.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The head of sixth form took up her post in September 2018. She has quickly evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of 16 to 19 study programmes and put increasingly effective measures in place to address any weaknesses.
- Students achieve well, but they do not achieve as well as pupils in key stages 3 and 4. The majority of students study A-level courses in Years 12 and 13. In 2018, provisional results show that students made good progress in most subjects. For example, students' progress was above average in geography, Spanish and economics compared to students nationally. The small number of students who study vocational qualifications also make good progress.
- Teaching is consistently effective in ensuring that students enjoy their lessons, but not quite as effective as teaching in the main school in ensuring that all students make excellent progress. Students play an active role in lessons because teachers encourage them to work independently. As a result, they make good progress.
- Varied extra-curricular activities mean that students play a rich role in school life. Many students participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and in the National Citizenship Service. Sixth-form prefects act as role models, and several students mentor younger pupils. Consequently, sixth-form students develop their leadership skills and build their self-confidence so that they are well prepared for life after sixth form.
- Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They receive informative careers advice. This means that they make appropriate choices at the end of Year 13. Almost all students go to university after their 16 to 19 study programme, and a significant number secure places at Russell Group universities. Nevertheless, some students told inspectors that they would value more opportunities to discuss their choices at the end of Year 13.
- Students' personal development is strong. They feel well supported by staff. Students learn about personal safety and the things they should consider to keep themselves safe. Students benefit from a range of support. For example, students are taught coping strategies as part of their PSHE education.
- Students who need to improve their English and mathematics are supported very well in their extra lessons. Consequently, students are largely successful when they resit their English and mathematics GCSEs.

School details

Unique reference number	142357
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	10054152

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,163
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	217
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Stephen Bridge
Headteacher	Louise Ceska
Telephone number	01628 625 068
Website	www.newlandsgirlsschool.co.uk/
Email address	office@newlandsgirls.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Newlands Girls' School is an above-average-sized secondary school. The school converted to academy status in October 2015 when it became a single academy trust.
- The majority of pupils are of White British background. The proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is well below the national average for secondary schools.
- The school uses no alternative provision.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average for secondary schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 58 lessons. In several observations, senior leaders joined inspectors.
- Inspectors visited five tutor-group sessions and one assembly.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, the headteacher and governors.
- Inspectors met formally with groups of pupils from key stages 3, 4 and 5. Pupils' views from questionnaire surveys were considered. Inspectors also spoke to pupils during social times and lessons.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff from meetings with groups of staff and from the 66 staff who responded to the confidential questionnaire.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 240 parents who responded to the confidential Ofsted parental questionnaire, including 98 written responses.
- Documentation scrutinised by inspectors included the school's plans for improvement, the self-evaluation, reports on attendance and behaviour, records relating to pupils' safety, minutes of governor meetings, and information on pupils' outcomes.

Inspection team

Harry Ingham, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Foster	Ofsted Inspector
Frederick Valletta	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Roche	Ofsted Inspector
Mary Davies	Ofsted Inspector

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