

Inspection of Wilmington Academy

Common Lane, Wilmington, Kent DA2 7DR

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 May 2023

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Wilmington Academy is an exceptional school providing a world-class education for its pupils and sixth formers. The International Baccalaureate (IB) philosophy is at the heart of the curriculum. It successfully encourages pupils to be open minded, to take risks and demonstrate their ability to think, reflect and communicate.

Pupils are safe and happy. Their behaviour is exceptional. They are always thoughtful, polite and respectful. Pupils understand and accept the rules. Bullying is rare and pupils are adamant that if it does occur, staff would take swift action to stop it immediately.

Pupils and students benefit from excellent careers guidance. They are well informed about careers in the wider world, and this supports their high aspirations for the future. Extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities are extensive, including trips abroad and clubs supporting art, music, drama, sports and the wider curriculum.

Pupils say that prejudice and discrimination are not tolerated. Differences are accepted and celebrated. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to their wider community and be active and confident citizens through sporting, performance and charitable activities.

Leaders and staff are highly committed to pupils' personal development, welfare and well-being. The personal development curriculum is delivered creatively and appropriately. The provision is effective in supporting pupils to become responsible and respectful world citizens.

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

The curriculum is carefully considered, meticulously sequenced and securely embedded. It is hierarchical across all years, including the sixth form. It is extremely ambitious and carefully matched to the national curriculum, while fully meeting the demanding requirements of the IB.

Leaders have focused resolutely on improving curriculum sequencing so that pupils build securely on prior knowledge. Links across subjects are systematically developed in line with the IB philosophy. Opportunities are actively highlighted to support pupils to remember more.

Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) study the same curriculum as their peers. They are well supported in lessons as well as through extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities. Higher prior attainers are suitably stretched and encouraged with visits to universities. Significant numbers of students continue into the sixth form and proceed to universities of their choice.

Teachers have expert subject knowledge and deliver lessons with clarity and enthusiasm. Pupils benefit from the support and encouragement of their teachers. Literacy skills are developed well, and subject-specific language is vigorously supported. Reading has a high priority across the school. There is an extensive range of provision to support pupils to read widely and often.

Assessment is regular and used to check the progression of pupils continuously to identify where further support is needed. Assessment is also used well to recognise where the curriculum might be further improved. Feedback is personalised with meaningful comments which pupils respond to and apply to future work.

Pupils are taught about diverse cultures and faiths. They learn about fundamental British values and look at values, such as democracy, across the world. The relationships and sex education programme supports pupils to know how to enjoy healthy relationships and lifestyles. Pupils fully understand consent in an appropriate and age-related way.

School leaders are highly ambitious for pupils' education. The principal is inspiring, passionate and determined. He is well supported by senior leaders, who are committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders are working productively to increase the uptake of languages and further improve GCSE outcomes for all pupils.

Leaders have designed systems and structures that are highly effective in supporting sixth-form students. There is a well-planned choice of pathways available. This choice is appropriate and demanding for the wide range of students. The personal development programme is extensive and wide-ranging. Outcomes are high compared with other IB schools internationally.

Middle leaders are supported through effective line management and high-quality training. Staff are proud and inspired to work at this school. They speak very positively about the support they receive. They fully appreciate the work done to support their workload and ensure their well-being. Staff are highly motivated and keenly enthusiastic.

Governors and trustees are clear and confident about their roles. They ensure that leaders remain focused on delivering an excellent education for all. The school is highly regarded for its work as an IB school and is actively involved in supporting other schools. The trust is fully involved in the life of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a very strong and well-established culture of safeguarding. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust. The single central record is carefully collated with all requirements followed and checked.

Vulnerable pupils and students are known and considerately supported. The school collaborates effectively with local agencies and the local authority. Referrals are overseen with sensitivity to ensure that pupils and their families are supported throughout and after the process.

There is a strong and committed culture of vigilance across the academy. Safeguarding issues are actioned quickly and effectively. All pupils and adults know how to report concerns and they are confident that they will be dealt with appropriately.

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	136205
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256312
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1355
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	185
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Frank Green
Principal	Michael Gore
Website	www.wilmingtonacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	24 to 25 February 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Wilmington Academy is an above average sized 11 to 19 mixed school with a below average sized sixth form. The school is part of Leigh Academies Trust.
- The academy is an International Baccalaureate World School which is registered for the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme and the International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme.
- The school is non-selective in an area of selective education. There are several grammar schools in the local area.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for 20 pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at seven registered education providers.

- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the second 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 conducted deep dives in English, mathematics, history, performing arts, physical education, and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the directors of learning, visited a sample of lessons, talked with teachers, spoke to pupils and students, and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, staff and pupils. They looked at the single central record and reviewed the school's safeguarding procedures and practices. Inspectors looked at school policies, curriculum documentation, behaviour logs, attendance records and destination statistics. The lead inspector met with trustees and governors as well as trust leaders.
- Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire and additional written comments from parents. They reviewed the survey returns completed by staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Julia Mortimore	Ofsted Inspector
Jason Philipsz	Ofsted Inspector
Tash Hurtado	Ofsted Inspector

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