

Inspection of a good school: Hillview School for Girls

Brionne Gardens, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 2HE

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 September 2023

Outcome

Hillview School for Girls continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Hilary Burkett. This school is part of The Hillview School for Girls Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The school is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mark Hiller.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a warm, friendly atmosphere both at Hillview and the satellite provision, The View @ East Street (TV@ES). Pupils and sixth-form students feel safe and cared for. They have confidence that staff will deal swiftly with any concerns, including rare incidents of bullying. The relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are very positive. Pupils trust and value their teachers and support staff.

The school aims to develop inspiration, innovation, independence and inclusivity. Pupils appreciate, and live up to, these high expectations. They particularly value the school's focus on the visual and performing arts. Pupils are proud of their school and keen to learn. Consequently, many pupils achieve well.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are polite and courteous in lessons. At breaktimes, they happily socialise. Sixth-form students are positive role models for younger pupils. They run the student council and organise supportive activities such as peer mentoring.

Pupils benefit from many interesting and exciting experiences offered through extra-curricular clubs. These include cheerleading, the 'Record Label' club and the 'F24' club, where pupils learn to race and maintain a racing car. Many pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils enjoy trips, both locally and internationally, to an array of destinations.

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

The school is ambitious for pupils to achieve highly. Most pupils achieve well. The curriculum in Years 7 and 8 provides a strong foundation for later study. Pupils are allowed some element of choice in the subjects they study in Year 9. This results in some

pupils missing out on studying humanities subjects in sufficient breadth by the end of key stage 3. In key stage 4 and in the sixth form, pupils have a wide range of options to choose from. Pupils value the opportunity to study subjects such as ancient history and film studies. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow the same curriculum as their peers. The school recognises that more pupils would benefit from studying an even more ambitious curriculum, such as represented by the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). While numbers studying modern foreign languages are increasing, the current curriculum for science at key stage 4 is limiting this ambition for some pupils.

Subject leaders and teachers have thought carefully about the knowledge and skills they want pupils to acquire, and in what order. Courses revisit key knowledge at a more advanced level as pupils work their way up the school. Teachers use their specialist knowledge to help pupils link new learning to what they already know. For example, in a Year 11 Spanish lesson, pupils used their knowledge of key vocabulary and grammatical structures to work out the meaning of sentences about homelessness.

In lessons, pupils concentrate well and work diligently. Activities are well planned. Many teachers are skilful in using a range of strategies, including questioning, to uncover gaps in pupils' understanding. Teachers know who disadvantaged pupils are but the school's strategies for improving disadvantaged pupils' achievement are not yet fully embedded across the school. This means that they do not achieve as highly as they could.

When staff have identified that a pupil has a particular need, effective support is provided. Many pupils with SEND make good strides forward because they benefit from high-quality teaching and extra interventions. At TV@ES, vulnerable students thrive from the personalised programmes and caring environment. One parent wrote: 'Our experience of TV@ES so far has been wonderful. The setting and approach are kind and nurturing.'

All pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure. The library is a popular place. The school has specific programmes in place for struggling readers, which help them to develop their confidence and fluency in reading.

The school ensures that pupils and sixth-form students are well prepared for their next steps. Careers provision is a strength of the school. Students in the sixth form benefit from well-considered work experience placements. Younger pupils begin to explore career opportunities at an early stage. Sixth-form students get appropriate advice and support, which they greatly appreciate. Many go on to higher education or apprenticeships.

The school has carefully designed a programme to develop pupils' understanding of the world around them. Pupils told us that they value their personal development lessons, which teach them how to stay safe and look after their health and well-being. This programme is readily adapted to respond to issues that arise locally or nationally.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They believe that leaders consider their well-being and workload. Teaching and support staff, including teachers in the early stages of their careers, feel supported and valued.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's agreed strategies to support disadvantaged pupils' learning are not universally used. This means that some disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that staff fully embed the school's agreed strategies to support the achievement of all pupils.
- The school's high ambition for achievement is not yet being realised in a small number of subjects. This is because some pupils are not consistently learning the key knowledge in humanities in key stage 3 and in science in key stage 4. The school should continue to review the curriculum to support pupils' achievement across the full EBacc curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2013.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs

and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	137104
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10288005
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
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	1,546
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	420
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Hiller
Headteacher	Hilary Burkett
Website	www.hillview.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a satellite provision called The View @ East Street. This supports identified pupils in key stage 4 and the sixth form. Pupils from other schools also attend.
- The school currently uses two registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic

began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, pupils, the chair of trustees and four other trustees. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- An inspector held a telephone discussion with a member of staff at the alternative providers.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including early career teachers, about behaviour and their workload in school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey. They took account of the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments, and two more detailed submissions made to Ofsted. Inspectors considered the views of pupils shared in the confidential pupil survey and through discussions held with pupils throughout the school.

Inspection team

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