

Inspection of William Ellis School

Highgate Road, London NW5 1RN

Inspection dates:	8 and 9 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. It provides them with a sense of community where difference is accepted and equality valued. Sixth-form students study alongside students on roll at three other schools. They welcome the opportunities this presents to extend their friendship groups. Across the school, pupils and adults establish strong and respectful working relationships. The school has robust systems in place to support pupils' safety and welfare.

Generally, pupils behave well in the classrooms and around the school at social times. The school has taken robust action to promote good behaviour, for example by reducing the use of derogatory language. This has included addressing issues around discrimination, including casual misogyny.

The school strives for all pupils to achieve well in their studies and in their personal development. The school is successful in meeting these goals. There is a strong, inclusive culture, and the school provides well for the much higher-than-average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils who struggle to achieve high GCSE grades are also supported well to access A-level or vocational courses in the sixth form. Pupils have many opportunities to participate in a wide range of enrichment activities. These include sports, debating and outdoor education.

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

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum. It covers all the requirements of the national curriculum. The school's high aspirations for its pupils are reflected in its ensuring that almost nine out of 10 pupils are entered for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). Pupils' achievements in the EBacc are particularly high, as are their outcomes in mathematics and humanities. The sixth-form curriculum offer is extensive. It offers students a very wide choice of A-level and vocational courses. Helping everyone to be successful in their sixth-form studies is well considered. For example, the school offers students an option of doing a year of level 2 foundational courses in preparation for entry to A-level and level 3 vocational courses.

The school has given careful thought, across the subjects, to the knowledge that it wants pupils to know. Teachers have the subject expertise to deliver the curriculum effectively. Pupils build their knowledge securely over time. Teachers ensure that pupils revise their work often. This helps them to retain key knowledge in their long-term memories. Staff have improved the strategies they use to check on pupils' learning. They identify pupils' knowledge gaps and misconceptions. However, some teaching does not routinely use this information to address the identified knowledge gaps. This means some gaps in pupils' key knowledge that lay the foundation for further successful learning remain and are not rectified early enough. This presents a barrier to pupils' successful future learning.

Staff have received training on how to adapt their teaching to meet the range of pupils' needs. This is having a positive effect on helping pupils with SEND to access the same curriculum as their peers.

Pupils are taught a rich and broad English curriculum. However, the school does not currently have a clear strategy to identify and support pupils who are not yet fully proficient in using phonics knowledge to read accurately and fluently. This makes it more difficult for them to access the wider curriculum.

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. They are attentive and engage well in class discussions, listening to and respecting each other's views. Sixth-form students make good use of the study facilities to work independently. The school deploys a wide range of well-considered strategies to encourage regular attendance.

The school's programme for impartial careers guidance and advice is effective. Pupils have encounters with the world of work, including via visitors, attending careers fairs and work experience, for instance. Almost all younger pupils take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. There are many residential trips on offer. Visits overseas support language learning and cultural understanding. Most pupils attend some of the many clubs on offer. Pupils are encouraged to become active citizens. Several older pupils lead and get involved with various charity fundraising initiatives. A group of boys collaborated with girls in another school to make a film to raise awareness of, and prevent, sexual harassment.

School leaders and the governing body share a vision and passion. They want to enable all pupils to succeed in their learning and gain the knowledge and cultural capital they need to be upright citizens. They work well together to achieve these goals. Staff said that the school supports them in a variety of ways to manage their workload and well-being. The school has built up a strong network in the local community to enrich the school's work and pupils' experiences.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, teaching does not address gaps in pupils' knowledge that have been identified through the school's assessment of learning. This means that some pupils do not secure the key prior knowledge that they will need for the next steps in their learning. The school should ensure that identified knowledge gaps are responded to effectively.
- The school lacks a coherent strategy to identify and support pupils who lack the phonics knowledge and skills to blend sounds to read words accurately and fluently. This means that these pupils may struggle to access reading materials across all subjects as well as they should. The school should find ways to assess, with precision, the gaps in phonics knowledge that weaker readers have. They should use the information to plan bespoke phonics support to enable these pupils to become confident and fluent readers.

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	100056
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	10345621
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	882
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	380
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sophie Jenkins
Headteacher	Izzy Jones
Website	www.williamellis.camden.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 May 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The chair of governors took up post in September 2024.
- The school makes use of four registered alternative provisions.
- The school is part of the LaSWAP sixth-form consortium made up of four local schools. Sixth-form students, therefore, have some lessons at other local schools, including a vocational course based at a local sports centre.
- 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered other subjects as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They spoke with the chair of the governing body and other governors. They also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- 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 reviewed a range of documentation, including looking at records of pupils' behaviour. Inspectors also had formal meetings with groups of staff and with groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey. They considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jonathan Newby	Ofsted Inspector
Katerina Christodoulou	Ofsted Inspector
Karim Ismail	His Majesty's Inspector

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