

Inspection of Reading Girls' School

Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berkshire RG2 7PY

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very proud of their school. They are keen to achieve academically and are exceptionally ambitious for their futures. Everyone recognises the school's very high expectations and the extensive improvements that have been made over recent years. In particular, pupils appreciate the dedicated, specialist teaching they receive. Alongside this, pupils are confident to ask for any help and support they may need to achieve their very best.

Pupils take a leading role in many aspects of the school. Prefects, and mental health and bullying ambassadors provide valuable support to their peers in times of need. Bullying is very rare because pupils treat each other with kindness and care. Staff and pupils value how much they can learn from their diverse school community. They respect each other's views and nurture everyone's differences.

Leaders provide a vast array of opportunities for pupils to find out about life outside of school. Strong links with businesses, academic institutions and charities give pupils real-life experiences that enhance their learning. Pupils are passionate about their 'Take the Pledge' projects. They are keen to raise awareness of different issues that affect their friends as well as making a difference in their local community.

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

School leaders and trustees are driven by a determination to create a school that inspires their pupils. They focus on providing a curriculum that gives pupils what they need to be lifelong learners. This includes considering different role models of successful women, which encourages pupils to be ambitious for their future careers. Pupils know that they are expected to work hard, and they rise to this challenge. They are active and enthusiastic learners. Pupils are keen to come to school and learning is rarely disrupted.

The curriculum has been developed and improved over the past few years. Pupils have consistently achieved well in many subjects, particularly in English and mathematics. Leaders' ambition that higher proportions of pupils are entered for the English Baccalaureate is also evident. Increasing numbers of pupils in key stage 4 are studying a humanities subject and a modern foreign language. At key stage 3, pupils study an ambitious science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) curriculum alongside a broad curriculum offer. Leaders are now focused on fully embedding the significant improvements that have been made. This will ensure pupils will confidently develop knowledge and skills across every subject.

Careful thought goes into the planning of support for pupils. This is particularly evident for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Needs are quickly identified when pupils join the school. Interventions help pupils who have the greatest need, including support for the weakest readers. Pupils who speak English as an additional language develop their knowledge of spoken and written English quickly. Most recently, staff have carefully considered any increased anxiety

of pupils because of the disruption caused by COVID-19. Pupils told inspectors how important this support has been to them. They also speak highly of the 'hybrid' remote education that helps pupils to continue learning, even when they are not in school.

Pupils are provided with many opportunities for personal development. This includes interesting workshops with external speakers as well as different clubs and school trips. However, the planning for this is disjointed. This means that pupils are also not always clear on aspects of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Pupils are a lot more confident about the careers guidance they receive. The older pupils in particular feel this has really helped them to find out about many different career pathways.

Leaders consistently prioritise the professional development of their staff. This includes a focus on making sure teachers have the most up-to-date and relevant specialist knowledge in their subject areas. As a result, learning has continued to strengthen. Staff feel very well supported by school leaders and trustees. They are proud to be part of the school as it continues to grow and flourish.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff foster strong relationships with pupils and their families from the moment they join the school. Leaders have a detailed understanding of the local area, including potential risks to pupils' safety and well-being. Thorough record-keeping illustrates how leaders work closely with external agencies to make sure families get help when needed.

The school is a close-knit community. Everyone looks out for each other. Pupils know how to report their worries or concerns. Staff act on these quickly. The school also provides useful opportunities for pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe. This includes when using social media.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The carefully planned and sequenced curriculum is not securely and consistently embedded across all subjects. This means that all pupils are not always confident in recalling and using the identified key knowledge and skills. Leaders should continue to monitor the full implementation of the curriculum, to ensure all pupils know and remember more across every subject.
- There is a lack of coherence around the personal development offer for pupils. While pupils experience many different interesting opportunities, including personal development days, these are disjointed. Pupils therefore do not confidently build their knowledge and understanding of aspects of the PSHE

curriculum. Leaders must look carefully at the current provision to consider how the planning and implementation of this curriculum can have more coherence and continuity.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	144610
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10203168
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	696
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jon Reekie
Principal	Marika Farrugia
Website	www.readinggirlsschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened as a sponsored academy in 2017. It is a member of the Thames Learning Trust.
- The school has a higher-than-average number of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school's sixth form is currently closed.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. They also spoke with representatives from the board of trustees, including the vice-chair. An inspector also spoke with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, history, art, physical education (PE) and dance. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered 114 responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including 48 free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys, as well as gathering additional views throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors viewed the school's website and policies, met with the designated safeguarding leads, spoke with pupils and staff, checked school records of safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school and spoke with trustees.

Inspection team

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