

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Devonport High School for Girls

Lyndhurst Road, Peverell, Plymouth, Devon PL2 3DL

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 February 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Lee Sargeant. This school is part of the Devonport High School for Girls single academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Vikki Frost.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Devonport High School for Girls pupils consistently fulfil their potential. The academic and pastoral support provided is exceptionally strong. This enables pupils to excel across the curriculum and in examinations.

Pupils enjoy their schooling. They listen attentively in class before bursting into animated discussion of the subject matter. They learn how to think and write in scholarly ways in each subject. Pupils appreciate the fair way they are treated by staff and the extra support they receive if they need to catch up.

The school supports pupils' diverse aspirations and interests. Many pupils go on to further study in the sciences, including careers in medicine. In the sixth form, students receive expert support with their applications to university. Throughout their time at the school, pupils continue to be active in sports and in the arts, as part of a rich extra-curricular programme.

Students in the sixth form thrive on the school's culture of ambition and invention. Alongside their studies, many undertake projects in which they innovate in the fields of science and technology or write academic papers. Sixth-form students provide valuable mentoring to younger pupils. They help with any academic or personal challenges.

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

The school provides a broad and distinctive curriculum. Pupils study a wide range of languages, including Chinese. There is the opportunity to study classics. Sixth-form students can study law, economics and politics, as well as the school's own offer, through a partnership with local schools. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades in the sixth form is very high.

At each stage, teaching provides detailed guidance on how to reach the highest levels of attainment. Staff show pupils precisely how to put together a response that will be rewarded with the highest marks. There are highly effective support systems which reduce the pressures of sitting examinations. This enables pupils to perform at their best.

Pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified with care. The school has developed expertise in supporting pupils with autism and pupils who struggle with anxiety. Teaching is adapted to meet pupils' needs. Pupils receive intensive support with their written responses until they are ready to produce the same high standard independently. This continues into the sixth form.

Pupils' learning is enriched with ambitious language and ideas. They read widely and keep comprehensive notes. Teaching is designed to ensure that pupils remember their learning over time. Any gaps or misconceptions that arise are addressed there and then, or form part of future lessons. There are regular checks on pupils' progress. Pupils receive valuable feedback which helps them to understand how to do better next time.

There is a relaxed, yet purposeful atmosphere in the school. Pupils and staff enjoy positive relationships. Due to high levels of trust, pupils are able to share their personal worries with staff. There are very strong systems in place to support any pupil who may face challenges. Attendance is very high. Specialist staff help to remove any barriers to regular attendance, often taking creative approaches.

The school encourages a healthy balance between academic efforts and pupils' wider development. Pupils maintain their physical health by playing games such as netball and cricket. There are student-led groups representing different interests such as the 'diversity council' which raises money for global causes. Pupils and students from the sixth form get together in the 'nurture base' where they support one another socially and emotionally. Pupils describe this as a place where 'we listen and don't judge'.

An age-appropriate curriculum in personal, social and health education helps pupils to make good decisions. It considers the possible risks in pupils' lives, including drugs, alcohol, sexual violence and harassment. Pupils cover topics to prepare them for adult life such as tax, and the law related to marriage and co-habiting. They are insightful in their understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Pupils and students in the sixth form place high value on the support they receive when selecting qualifications and considering careers. Work experience and volunteering are

prioritised, with many pupils undertaking ambitious placements. The school helps students to build on these experiences when applying for a university place or apprenticeship.

Leaders routinely bring in external experts to challenge the school to be ever better. There is a culture of continuous improvement. Staff engage readily in the school's programme of professional development. Since the previous inspection, this has led to significant improvements in the quality of teaching and in pupils' achievement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in November 2019.

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	136588
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10344599
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
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	860
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	221
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Vikki Frost
Headteacher	Lee Sargeant
Website	www.dhsg.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 November 2019

Information about this school

- The school is the only member of the Devonport High School for Girls single academy trust.
- The headteacher joined the school in January 2022.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.
- 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 evaluation 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the chair of the board of trustees and two other trustees.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with groups of staff and pupils, including students in the sixth form, to discuss their experiences of the school.
- 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.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Lovett

Ofsted Inspector

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