

Inspection of a good school: The Hermitage School

Oakwood Road, St John's, Woking, Surrey GU21 8UU

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 June 2024

Outcome

The Hermitage School continues to be a good school.

The executive headteacher of this school is Clare Spires. This school is part of The Swan Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Elaine Cooper, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ian Girdler.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school and love learning. They are happy and safe and know the importance of meeting the high expectations for behaviour that the school expects of them. Pupils recognise and respect that some of their classmates need different types of support to help them behave well. This helps everyone to feel included and involved.

Pupils understand the school's six values well. They know that they must show respect to everyone no matter what their background is. They understand that showing integrity is to be honest. Unkind behaviour and bullying are rare. When they do happen, adults are quick to take action to make sure this behaviour is not repeated.

The school prioritises ensuring pupils take part in a wide range of experiences. Pupils benefit from events such as the annual talent show and termly art competition. They learn about the importance of sustainability through projects, such as planting trees with a local wildlife trust in their on-site forest area. Pupils' learning is further enriched by visiting historical and cultural places of interest. Pupils keenly describe their excitement to compete in a local swimming gala, as a result of swimming lessons in a pop-up pool.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious and engaging, catering to all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school is currently updating its curriculum, incorporating carefully selected resources for subjects like mathematics and science, while using in-house expertise to further develop areas, such as music and art.

The school has put plans in place to address areas of the curriculum where pupils' achievement in national statutory assessments needed further improvement. There is clear evidence of the impact of this work. Consequently, current pupils are achieving well. The school's use of reflection and journaling, especially in mathematics, helps pupils to connect new learning with what they already know. Pupils are now more confident in using important mathematics skills because they can express their thoughts about mathematics out loud through discussion.

Most pupils learn to read accurately and fluently. The school makes sure that pupils use their well-stocked library regularly, which helps reading become a routine part of pupils' lives. A renewed focus on phonics for pupils who are not yet reading fluently, including those in the Orchard Centre, is making a difference. New resources alongside well-trained adults means that pupils who have fallen behind are given targeted support to catch up, and most do. A small minority of pupils are still not able to read fluently. The school has plans to strengthen the teaching of reading for these pupils further.

The school has responded to the changing and increasingly complex levels of need presented by some pupils at the school. Pupils' barriers to learning are identified quickly and supportive plans are put in place to reduce these. Training has taken place to ensure that staff can meet the needs of all pupils. Wherever possible, pupils with SEND learn the same content as their peers. This includes pupils from the Orchard Centre, who integrate with their peers in the main classes. Adults make sure that pupils get appropriate support when needed. For instance, simplified written materials or extra resources help pupils focus on key learning. As a result, disadvantaged pupils, including those with SEND, achieve well.

The school and trust provide training and support for teaching staff, ensuring they have the necessary resources and subject knowledge for effective teaching. This allows teachers to thoughtfully plan their lessons and they report this helps with their workload and well-being. In most lessons, teachers check what pupils remember and use this information to plan their next steps. Sometimes, gaps in pupils' understanding are not recognised, meaning they can be unsure in the meaning and use of important concepts. An example of this is in religious education, where new curriculum content is not always known and understood by pupils.

Pupils' personal development is strong, with many opportunities to develop leadership skills. Roles in the school council, as house captains or prefects, contribute to pupils' pride, especially in their ability to make a positive impact beyond the school. For instance, they actively raise funds for chosen charities. Pupils' tolerance and respect of one another is developed through learning about difference and through visitors and visits linked to religious places of interest. These experiences help pupils to become well-rounded individuals and citizens.

Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning, they enjoy school and the vast majority attend regularly. For those who do not, the school is working closely with families and other agencies to increase the time pupils are attending school. As a result, the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent is improving.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The support that some pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read receive is not always effective. This means a small minority of pupils do not securely develop their phonics knowledge. This limits their ability to read fluently. The school should ensure that the strategies to help those pupils who struggle to read enable them to catch up.
- Occasionally, some teachers do not check closely enough that pupils have remembered the most important skills and knowledge from their previous learning, especially where curriculum content is new. Consequently, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and struggle to make connections in their learning. The school should make sure that teachers check carefully that pupils can recall and use skills and knowledge accurately.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 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	140594
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10321986
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	314
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ian Girdler
CEO of trust	Elaine Cooper
Headteacher	Clare Spires (Executive headteacher)
Website	www.hermitage.surrey.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 February 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Swan Trust.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school has a breakfast and after-school club run by the school.
- The school has a specialised resourced provision, the Orchard Centre, for 17 pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD). All pupils have an education, health and care plan and some have other needs in addition to MLD.

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 has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the senior leadership team and members of staff.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.
- The inspector considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' written comments.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and religious education. For each deep dive, the inspector met leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to adults in the school, spoke to pupils about their learning.
- The inspector also looked at pupils' work, curriculum plans and spoke to leaders and pupils about some other subjects.
- The inspector gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour and the school's wider curriculum.
- The inspector looked at the school's own evaluation and development plans.
- The inspector took into account the views of staff during meetings with them and from the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspector took into account the views of pupils during meetings with them and from the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The inspector also met with the chair of the trust, the CEO, and members of the local governing board.

Inspection team

Clare Haines, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024