

Hoe Valley School

Kingfield Road, Woking, Surrey GU22 9AA

Inspection dates

12–13 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The school is exceptionally well led. Leaders successfully ensure that the highly aspirational principles upon which the school was founded are put into practice.
- Leaders leave nothing to chance. All aspects of the school are thoroughly checked and reviewed. Leaders are fearless in their approach to giving, and receiving, robust feedback about the school's work.
- Staff and pupils are very well nurtured by leaders. Staff are dedicated to delivering high-quality experiences for pupils day in and day out.
- The carefully considered, bespoke curriculum is very effectively implemented and supports pupils in acquiring both breadth and depth in their learning.
- Practice in teaching is consistently effective and some is exceptional. Many pupils are inspired to learn by teachers' strong subject knowledge.
- Assessment approaches are excellent. They build a detailed and accurate picture of where any gaps are in pupils' learning as well as their progression through the curriculum.
- Pupils make consistently strong progress and for some progress is very rapid. The majority are on track to meet their highly challenging targets.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are particularly well served by strong teaching and the aspirational culture. Leaders systematically remove barriers that prevent them achieving.
- Leaders keep pupils safe and make sure that pupils have the support they need to improve their self-esteem and well-being.
- Attendance is improving due to very effective approaches that have led to an impressive reduction in the rates of persistent absence.
- Personal development and well-being are good. Most pupils work very hard and show high levels of commitment to learning. Leaders work unstintingly to support and encourage the minority who are less committed to their studies.
- Behaviour is good but not outstanding. The majority of pupils follow the school's behaviour code and are respectful to staff, and to other pupils. However, a minority do not follow the rules. The school is working effectively with this group and their behaviour is improving.
- A number of parents and carers are critical of the school. In some cases, this is because they are not aware of the positive impact that the school's approaches are having on pupils' learning, behaviour and attendance.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen newer, effective approaches to improve the behaviour of a minority of pupils, ensuring that parents are fully aware of the rationale for these approaches and how well they are working.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher, in close conjunction with the dynamic and determined leadership team, vigorously ensures that pupils' day-to-day experiences are of the highest quality possible. The education that the school provides extends pupils' intellectual horizons, enables them to fulfil their potential and endows them with a raft of life skills.
- An ethos of high ambition permeates through all aspects of the school's work. Both teaching and ancillary staff wholeheartedly promote the aspirational principles upon which the school was founded. The headteacher maximises the commitment that all staff feel by encouraging ancillary staff to observe lessons accompanied by a member of the teaching staff. This opportunity is hugely motivating. It enables staff in support roles to experience first-hand the impact that their work 'behind the scenes' has on pupils' learning.
- Leaders' and governors' high expectations are very effectively established throughout the school. Leaders stringently check all aspects of the school to see if their expectations are being fully met. They acknowledge that a small number of pupils who are new to the school, and also some with additional needs, do not behave as well as other pupils. Leaders are working very successfully with these pupils and, as a consequence, their behaviour is improving.
- Leaders have established a culture of trust and mutual respect. As a result, staff respond very well to the honest feedback they receive from their peers, from the very rigorous external reviews, and from their line managers. The school's mantra, 'fearless feedback', is adhered to by all, including pupils.
- Of note is the excellent system that leaders have developed to track pupils' progress, towards exceptionally challenging targets. These targets very successfully promote accelerated progress. The tracking system provides leaders with a detailed overview of the advances that pupils are making in their learning and progress. Leaders bring to bear their well-developed curriculum knowledge when they interpret information provided by the system. Their evaluation of progress is accurate and usefully informs plans for staff training and development.
- The school rightly prides itself on its unique provision but it is also outward-looking and collaborates very effectively with other schools. Work with partner schools has successfully ensured that assessment is accurate and that staff have the chance to develop their practice, especially middle leaders.
- The curriculum is outstanding because it meets pupils' individual needs very well, while raising their aspirations. The curriculum has been thoughtfully designed so that it has maximum flexibility built into it. Pupils benefit from well-planned opportunities to delve deeply into a broad range of subjects and, as a consequence, they can discover which subjects enthral them the most. Pupils are given the chance to pursue any enthusiasms they acquire. For example, pupils with a passion for languages can study up to three languages, including Latin.
- The flexibility in the curriculum means that all pupils, irrespective of ability, experience breadth and depth in their learning. The thorough grounding that pupils have across a

wide variety of subject areas, such as the arts, languages, humanities and practical subjects, as well as core subjects, supports their impressive progress. In addition, pupils regularly experience special 'drop-down' days which intensively promote the school's values, as well as fundamental British values, using a range of imaginative approaches.

- This is a highly inclusive school, where pupils, many of whom experience significant barriers to success, flourish. They do so because they are provided with very effective support to overcome any obstacles to achieving. The regularly timetabled 'prep' lesson, which assists pupils in completing their 'prep' or homework, is a good example of the strong support provided by the school. It means that all pupils access an environment that helps them to complete 'prep' tasks to a high level, which in turn boosts progress.
- While in general parents who completed the online survey praised the school, a number did not. Some said that the school was too strict and others that it was not strict enough. Leaders run a tight ship, not least because of the constraints of the temporary accommodation but also because it enables pupils to achieve the best they can. Although leaders regularly update parents on what they have changed in response to their feedback, some parents are not sufficiently aware of the very positive effects that the school has on pupils' learning, achievement and confidence.

Governance of the school

- Governance is very strong and supports the school in delivering its aims and setting high standards. Governors, some of whom founded the school, recognise that their role is strategic rather than operational. They make very effective use of reports from external consultants to ensure that they are focusing on the most relevant areas and that they are sufficiently objective when forming judgements about how well the school is doing.
- Governors have a very strong commitment to the moral purpose upon which the school was initially established. They therefore relentlessly focus on pupils who have barriers to their learning. They are very clear that the best way to support disadvantaged pupils is to provide them with excellent teaching from expert teachers every day. To this end, governors nurture their committed staff and have engineered their pay policy so that it is easy to reward effective staff. As result, staff attendance is exceptionally high and since the school was set up no agency teaching staff have been used.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has a closely monitored system for ensuring that any concerns are recorded and acted on appropriately. The designated leader ensures that all referrals made to the local authority are very meticulously followed up. Her vigilance, expertise and tight record-keeping mean that she has a strong working relationship with external welfare agencies.
- The school has carefully considered plans to ensure that pupils learn about the dangers of social media, especially online grooming. Well-planned programmes of study provide opportunities for pupils to explore issues around consent and self-worth, which play a significant role in helping them adopt safer practices. The work of specially trained staff, who support pupils and their families with a range of issues, including

attendance, is effective. It is rigorously overseen by a member of staff with expertise in social care.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching is consistently at least good, and often outstanding. In a number of subjects, such as art, history, geography, modern foreign languages and business studies, it is regularly outstanding. In addition, across the school, some aspects of teachers' practice, such as assessment and questioning, are consistently very strong.
- Teachers make excellent use of performance indicators that are tailor-made for each subject. They use them to ensure that the tasks they set provide opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding at a deep level. Consistently strong practice in assessment means that pupils build well on what they already know and can do.
- Following some changes in staffing, there have been rapid and deep improvements in the teaching of mathematics. Teaching in mathematics is now more consistently effective and some is excellent. Consequently, pupils who experienced some weaker teaching in the past are now catching up with their peers. Of note is the way teachers' highly skilful questioning enables pupils to identify and address their own misconceptions.
- Teaching in English is mostly strong and some aspects support pupils in their learning extremely well. The new subject leader has introduced a number of successful approaches. For example, teachers provide very helpful prompts for pupils to use when they analyse complex passages in the challenging whole texts they read. This assists pupils in being able to make comparisons between texts and between genres.
- Teachers plan learning well. They use their highly developed subject knowledge to provide pupils with insights into the topics they study. Pupils are stimulated by these insights and draw on them when discussing key concepts. As a consequence, the quality of pupils' discussions is very high and supports them in completing work to an impressive standard.
- Across the school pupils work very hard. They studiously complete the tasks that teachers set them and make excellent use of the resources provided to assist them in reaching high standards. In particular, pupils benefit from online resources that enable them to review their work, make changes to it as they go along as well as assisting them in memorising subject-specific vocabulary.
- Effective teaching expands pupils' horizons, enhances their capacity to think in different ways and supports them in acquiring subject knowledge and skills. For example, in history, pupils study the English Civil War in depth and consequently build up a strong body of knowledge about the origins of the war and how it was fought. They apply this exceptionally well when evaluating the relative reliability of different original sources.
- Very strong teaching means that pupils are aware of the best methods of learning and how to employ them. For example, less-able pupils in Year 9, in business studies, showed that they had a sharp understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of methods for memorising core subject content. They made good use of this understanding when planning a revision lesson for their peers.

- Teaching in Year 7 enables pupils to build very effectively on their prior learning. Year 7 pupils commented to inspectors about how much they were stimulated by the new work they are set and how much 'new stuff they had learned'. They were pleased that their teachers had a strong working knowledge of the key stage 2 curriculum which assisted the pupils in swiftly making links between new learning and what they knew already.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Although aspects are very impressive, such as the development of pupils' work skills, it is not outstanding. This is because a very small number of pupils do not engage positively enough with their learning. Leaders' work with this group is focused and bespoke. It is leading to strong improvement for some pupils. However, others have further to go.
- The vast majority of pupils are very committed to their studies and are highly motivated. They work hard and the school generally has a studious atmosphere.
- Pupils' resilience and their skills for work are very successfully developed. Pupils are highly receptive to the developmental and honest feedback they receive from their teachers and promptly act on it.
- There is very effective support for pupils who struggle to manage their emotions or have personal difficulties. A range of dedicated staff, some with experience in social work, assist pupils in removing emotional barriers to their success, such as low self-esteem.
- Learning related to careers and employment is very strong because it is an integral aspect of one of the school's core aims. Programmes are carefully planned and based on the latest government guidance. Of note is the way all subject leaders are responsible for planning and delivering work-related skills that are most relevant to the subject they lead. This means that academic and work-related learning are seen as equally important.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good but not outstanding. This is because a small number of pupils, many of whom joined the school having had turbulent experiences hitherto, do not always follow the school's behaviour code.
- Leaders have put in place effective rewards and sanctions to ensure that all pupils' behaviour meets their high standards. A minority of parents made comments on the online survey about how strict the school is. However, pupils said that they liked it when teachers applied the school's behaviour policy rigorously because it meant that they could get on with their work without being distracted.
- Pupils told inspectors that the school was relatively free of bullying and any occasional incidents were dealt with well. Leaders have astutely identified that pupils are not always clear about the definition of bullying and sometimes mistake friendship issues

for bullying. New approaches are focused on ensuring that pupils gain a better understanding of these differences as well as some strategies they can use to resolve minor fall-outs between friends.

- Since earlier this year, the number of detentions being given for low-level disruption has declined. For some pupils, the decline has been significant and shows the positive impact of the approaches adopted by the school.
- Leaders have been relentless in their pursuit of improving attendance. They have used a number of successful tactics, not least ensuring that all pupils benefit from meaningful learning experiences every day. Persistent absence has reduced during this academic year and is now below the national average for 2016/17.
- The very small number of pupils attending off-site provision behave well while there and attend regularly. Leaders very carefully select the provision to meet pupils' individual needs. Collaboration between the school and off-site providers is highly effective.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Due to consistently effective teaching and high expectations, pupils make excellent progress in their learning across a broad range of subjects. Pupils' books show that they generally reach very high standards in the demanding work they are set.
- Pupils' progress is enhanced because they are given extremely challenging progress targets.
- Detailed tracking shows that most pupils are in line to reach their very demanding end-of-year targets. There is very little variation between subjects in terms of the impressive progress that pupils make. In part, this is because of the broad and balanced curriculum, which enables pupils to build their expertise across a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils' progress from their starting points is well above average and for some it is exceptionally strong. Progress scores for Year 9 pupils, based on English and mathematics tests taken in March, are well above average. Nearly half of pupils at the school are making higher or much higher progress than is typical. This proportion is well above other schools that participated in the tests. In mathematics, pupils' progress based on these tests was particularly impressive.
- Through working closely with targeted pupils, the school ensures that pupils who joined the school after the start of Year 7 settle in quickly and achieve well. As a result, they make very strong progress. Similarly, strong teaching and highly bespoke support mean that disadvantaged pupils make progress that is at least in line with that of pupils nationally with similar starting points. The progress that disadvantaged pupils make in mathematics is particularly strong.
- Targeted Year 7 and 8 pupils, many of whom have SEN and/or disabilities, do extremely well in the programmes set up to assist them in catching up. For example, every single pupil who accessed additional help in mathematics in Years 7 and 8 met the challenging targets they were set. In English, the vast majority met their challenging targets.

- Across the school, pupils with additional needs, such as pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, are provided with consistently strong teaching which supports them in making progress. Of note is the way these pupils' verbal communication is of a high standard. They use subject-specific vocabulary confidently and accurately.
- Highly effective teaching means that pupils' creative work, including media work, is of a very high standard. For example, pupils' sketchbooks in art show that they have mastered some complicated drawing and painting techniques.
- Pupils in Year 9 demonstrate that they are ready for the next phase of their education. They generally have good work habits and communicate very confidently.

School details

Unique reference number	142009
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10046618

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	Registered for 11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	354
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lynne O'Reilly
Headteacher	Mrs Penelope Alford
Telephone number	01483 662627
Website	http://hoevalleyschool.org
Email address	info@hoevalleyschool.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2015 and currently caters for pupils in Years 7–9. It was founded by a group of parents, two of whom are now members of the school's governing body.
- The school is temporarily housed in Portakabins in the car park of Woking Leisure Centre. It will move to newly built, bespoke premises in September 2018.
- The school works very closely with a number of other schools in Woking, especially those in the Arete partnership of schools. The headteacher is chair of the local authority Fair Access Panel.
- The school is now almost full in Year 9 and has a waiting list for other year groups.
- Four pupils are educated off-site for some of the week. The rest of the time they are educated at the school. Two are educated at North West Surrey Short Stay School and two at Skillway.

- The school has an above-average proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for additional pupil premium funding is slightly above average and a higher than average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups.
- The current headteacher has worked part time since January, sharing her role with the associate headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made visits to observe learning in 31 lessons, mostly accompanied by senior leaders. Samples of pupils' work from every year group were scrutinised by inspectors.
- On several occasions, inspectors made short visits to lessons to observe behaviour and learning, including visiting morning and afternoon form time. Inspectors also made short visits to lessons focusing on support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and on a separate occasion, focusing on the impact of the curriculum on Year 7 pupils' learning.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, associate headteacher and held separate meetings with senior leaders in relation to a range of areas.
- Inspectors met separately with middle leaders, a group of staff, newly qualified/trainee teachers, and also with three different groups of pupils. Separate meetings were also held with the leader responsible for careers guidance, the consultant from the Department for Education who has supported the school, and with the designated safeguarding leader on two occasions. A meeting was held with the chair of the governing body accompanied by three other members of the governing body.
- Telephone calls were made to Skillway and North West Surrey Short Stay School as well as one of the school's three improvement partners.
- Inspectors reviewed the 303 responses made by pupils to the online survey and 29 responses made by staff. They also took account of the 89 responses given by parents to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View, and the 41 comments made by parents using the free-text facility within Parent View.
- Documentation and policies, which included the school's own evaluation, development plans and responses to the school's own parental surveys, were reviewed. Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding records, including safety checks made when teachers are appointed, pupils' records and a selection of teachers' files.

Inspection team

Sarah Hubbard, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Foster

Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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