

Inspection of a good school: North East Surrey Secondary Short Stay School

174 Molesey Road, Hersham, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey KT12 4QY

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 September 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Trusting relationships are the key to this school's success. Staff help pupils to grow in confidence and to be ambitious for their futures. Pupils learn how to manage their feelings successfully. This helps them to concentrate on their learning. Parents and carers appreciate the positive difference that the school makes to their children's behaviour and learning. They say that the staff 'go above and beyond'.

Pupils enjoy activities that develop their social skills. They enjoy learning about food preparation and nutrition while making lunch, and they plan charity events, such as a recent coffee morning. Pupils are taught how to stay safe and healthy. They get on well together and there are very few incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that relationships with peers are good.

Pupils enter the school having missed periods of time in education. The school offers all pupils a fresh start, regardless of their past difficulties. Its inclusive ethos helps pupils to feel valued. Teachers believe that every pupil can and will achieve success by the time they move on. Pupils say that staff respect their views, listen and talk to them like adults. Pupils welcome the recent changes that leaders have introduced.

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

The school has been through a period of rapid change during the past nine months. Within a short timescale, leaders have redesigned the curriculum and changed the way behaviour is managed. Carefully chosen subjects and courses ignite pupils' interest in learning. Each pupil is offered a personalised approach that matches their needs. Pupils and parents have a say in the design and content of the timetable. The curriculum aims to prepare pupils to select a future pathway. The school's personalised approach means that most pupils attend well. Their increased interest in learning helps to minimise behaviours that disrupt lessons.

Staff are alert to pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers understand pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs exceptionally well. They know exactly how these affect pupils' attitudes towards learning. During breakfast, staff quickly spot the support that pupils need to settle to work, and they adjust teaching accordingly. Staff also help pupils to identify their own support strategies, such as taking a short walk, playing a game, or spending a few minutes on a mindfulness activity. The skilled staff team includes the school's therapeutic dog. Pupils say he helps to keep them calm.

Alternative providers are used productively to help pupils to develop vocational and workplace skills. Pupils learn to persevere. While making T-joints in a carpentry course, for example, the tutor helped them to discover that 'practise makes perfect'. Pupils also enjoy meaningful work experiences that are chosen to match their interests.

In most subjects, learning is well sequenced across different units of work. This makes the content meaningful for pupils. It helps them to know and remember more. In English, pupils explore a range of interesting fiction. They enjoy modern books with interesting characters, such as 'Gangsta Rap' by Benjamin Zephaniah. Texts such as this are used effectively to help pupils to learn about style and structure. They are prepared to practise their writing so as to become more successful. One pupil told inspectors, 'I've become smart now'. The work of famous artists intrigues pupils. It makes them want to explore materials and techniques. Pupils learn how to work diligently to create their own high-quality artwork.

Leadership is not effective in some subjects. Leaders have not ensured that there is enough expertise to help pupils to build their knowledge. For example, most pupils have gaps in their understanding of writing and mathematics. Pupils' academic needs are not assessed as precisely as their learning behaviours. Leaders' current work is beginning to tackle this. They are improving the use of assessments to unpick important gaps in pupils' prior learning.

Teachers are enthusiastic about the school's renewed vision and purpose. They say they are proud to work at the school. One teacher explained that the changes leaders have introduced are 'like having a new job'. Improvements to behaviour management and the curriculum mean that teachers 'can get on and teach, and pupils can learn'. Staff say that leaders are considerate of their workloads.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture. All staff and governors are well trained to understand their responsibilities. Leaders make suitable checks on the safeguarding arrangements of the school's alternative providers.

Staff know pupils' care needs well and spot when they need more help. The staff's vigilance helps leaders to identify when to ask other agencies to step in or do more. Designated safeguarding leaders work closely with parents, carers and other

professionals. Staff know about the risks that pupils face in their communities. Teachers often help pupils to reflect upon how they can keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is variation in how well some subjects are led. This means that the curriculum in these subjects is not planned coherently to build pupils' knowledge. Leaders should ensure that all teachers have the necessary training to develop the subject expertise they need to implement a well-sequenced curriculum that helps all pupils to know, understand and remember more.
- Teachers' assessment of each pupil's academic strengths and weaknesses is not comprehensive. This means that pupils are not consistently well supported to build upon their prior learning. Leaders should ensure that the use of assessment is integral to curriculum planning.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 3 and 4 October 2012.

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	135891
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10200046
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Headteacher	Michelle Blackman, Nick Elliott (interim headteacher), Mary Rome (executive headteacher)
Website	www.nessss.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 September 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is split across two sites in Hersham and Staines. Since the September 2021 term, the Hersham site has been designated for medically vulnerable pupils. The Staines site now provides for key stage 4 pupils, most of whom have been unable to sustain a place in a mainstream school.
- Almost all pupils have SEND and one third of current pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The Hersham site was closed between December 2020 and September 2021 for remedial building works. During this period, a number of pupils were transferred to another pupil referral unit in Surrey. They returned to the school two weeks prior to the inspection.
- The new management committee, appointed by the local authority in spring 2021, has overseen a number of important organisational changes in consultation with headteachers and the local authority.
- The current interim headteacher has been in post since April 2021. There is an executive headteacher from a local special school.
- The school has recently begun to deliver a commissioned key stage 3 outreach service to 13 of the 15 local secondary schools that it serves.

- The school makes use of seven alternative providers for key stage 4 pupils. They attend these for specific sessions and periods of time. The providers include a local college and several charities that offer vocational training in construction, sport, and motor repair.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with a range of senior staff during the inspection, including the executive headteacher, the interim headteacher and the chair of the management committee.
- Inspectors spoke to members of the management committee, local headteachers, the school's improvement partner and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, design technology (food studies) and personal, social and health education. They met with a range of staff and pupils. They made visits to lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked to them about it. Inspectors also considered pupils' learning in other subjects.
- Inspectors took account of 20 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 10 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- To gain the views of parents, inspectors talked to four of them on the telephone. They also considered the responses from the six parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's improvement plan and safeguarding documents. Inspectors evaluated information related to pupils' behaviour and their wider development.
- A range of activities supported inspectors to look at safeguarding. These included meeting leaders, talking to staff, parents, and pupils, and reviewing a range of school documents and records.

Inspection team

Linda Jacobs, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Emma Phillips

Ofsted Inspector

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