

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Surrey Teaching Centre

Tadworth Street, Tadworth Court, Tadworth, Surrey KT20 5RU

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 October 2021

Outcome

The Surrey Teaching Centre continues to be an outstanding school.

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding 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?

This school helps pupils to reconnect successfully with learning during their stay at The Children's Trust. Pupils have often had periods of time out of education as a result of an acquired brain injury. Here, lessons become a normal part of each pupil's day, alongside their therapies. Teaching staff expertly help pupils to recall past learning. Both staff and pupils are very determined, and ambitions are high. Pupils work hard in their lessons, as do their dedicated teachers. Once pupils begin to remember what they used to know, they may be able to build on their memories. This equips them to return to their home community, and to continue their recovery. Sometimes, a pupil's learning plan will contain more content than is manageable during their short stay.

Mutually respectful relationships exist between staff and pupils. There are the very highest levels of care and concern for pupils' well-being. Teachers work seamlessly with other professionals to understand and meet pupils' needs. Together, the adults make sure that pupils feel safe and can express themselves freely.

Staff have the highest expectations of pupils' behaviour. On rare occasions, a recovering pupil might push a boundary. A quiet reminder from the teacher is all it needs to be quickly back on track. Incidents of unkind behaviour are equally rare. Where these occur, they are unintentional. There is no bullying.

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

Teachers in this school make a unique contribution by skilfully helping pupils to recall past knowledge. Teachers find interesting activities and stimuli that appeal to each individual. Sometimes, the learning that teachers unlock can be built on readily. Often, the knowledge that pupils recall is patchy, requiring the utmost patience. At other times,

pupils make huge strides forward. For example, inspectors saw how Nursery children had recovered their delight in playing in the home corner.

Teachers are alert to pupils' every response, especially when they are in the early stages of recovery. During lessons, teachers talk quietly to pupils, describing sensory experiences that aim to stimulate a response. Teachers never give up. Their continuous use of assessment supports pupils' ongoing recovery and development. As pupils recover, teachers acknowledge pupils' sense of frustration about what they can no longer do. Teachers encourage pupils to focus on current achievements. A positive mood helps them to make more progress.

At the heart of the curriculum is a 'personal pathway' that supports each pupil's journey of recovery. They regularly work at this. For example, early years children listen to stories to help them to think 'all about me'. Both primary and secondary pupils are helped to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Pupils' own interests are used as a way into learning. They identify what is most important, both now and in the future. Students in the sixth form are particularly ambitious. Teachers help them to take the small steps that are needed to move towards independence. The staff also help all pupils to be aware of the changes resulting from their injury. Pupils are helped to consider how to look after their own health and well-being.

School staff work diligently to develop pupils' communication, language and literacy skills. Communication with pupils often starts by interpreting tiny gestures. Adult-led sessions support even the very youngest children to meet identified communication targets. They quickly learn to express preference. For example, when appropriate, teachers support pupils to develop their use of eye gaze. This opens the door to spelling words and phrases and can lead to the use of assistive communication technology. When pupils leave the school, they typically say that their teachers listen to them. They value their lessons, and they like and respect the teaching staff. This means that there is no disruption to learning.

Most parents and carers live on site and are welcome partners in their child's learning recovery. They are overwhelmingly positive about how well teachers understand their child. Teachers' detailed assessments support pupils to move back to their school or new placement. Wherever possible, teachers will join the pupil at their school or nursery visit. Alternatively, they may pass information on by other means. Schools and nursery settings praise the helpful reports they receive. They say that these enable them to build on pupils' learning. The school's support offers training and long-term follow-up to share effective strategies.

Placements are often shorter than they used to be. The school's curriculum planning has not been adapted to meet this change. On occasion, it is unwieldy. Staff are right behind their leaders' drive to reduce unnecessary curriculum planning. Assessments are now being streamlined to be more meaningful.

Staff are very positive about their work at the school and feel well supported by leaders. There is a strong sense of teamwork. Teachers access training that is linked to pupils' individual medical and learning needs. Teachers have not had the same opportunities for

subject-specific professional development. For example, the school lacks up-to-date teacher expertise in areas of learning, such as phonics, reading and mathematics.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders' deep understanding of the difficulties of having an acquired brain injury underpins the school's culture. Staff are mindful that behaviours can often change and be easily misunderstood. They look out for even the smallest concern and follow it through diligently. Teachers work with their multi-agency colleagues to identify needs. Together, they secure the help that pupils will need when they return home.

Occasionally, a pupil has an injury because of a former risk-taking behaviour. The staff do all they can to ensure that worrying influences in the community will be well managed. They help pupils to consider how they can stay safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum has not been adapted to reflect the recent changes at the school and to respond to pupils' typically shorter length of stay. This means that, sometimes, there is too much for teachers to consider in their planning. Leaders need to ensure that, in order to meet realistic end-points, the curriculum is more sharply focused.
- In some subjects, regarded as central to the curriculum, teachers' subject knowledge is not up to date. This means that, other than for pupils working within the engagement model, the school does not always have access to the subject knowledge and subject-pedagogical knowledge that might be needed. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers have access to effective professional development that enhance their subject-specific knowledge and skills, particularly relating to phonics, reading and mathematics.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in March 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	134108
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10200085
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of students in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	16
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	2
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Headteacher	Becky Heaton
Website	www.tadworthcourt.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 September 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Pupils in the school are uniquely placed by The Children’s Trust, a charity that supports children with acquired brain injury and their families. The length of placements varies according to pupils’ needs. Recently, there has been an increase in the number of shorter placements (six to eight weeks). Placements may run across a school holiday. As The Children’s Trust is a national charity, pupils in the school may come from anywhere in the United Kingdom.
- Owing to pupils’ extreme vulnerabilities, the school continues to operate within rigorous protocols to reduce COVID-19 transmission. This means that pupils usually have one-to-one teaching and for shorter than usual amounts of time.
- The new headteacher was appointed in February 2021 and has been full time since April 2021.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, teachers and support staff. The lead inspector spoke by telephone with the deputy director of education for the local authority, and with the chair and vice-chair of the management committee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading (including communication, literacy and language), mathematics, and personal, social, health and citizenship education. Inspectors visited lessons to meet pupils and find out what they were learning. They scrutinised a large sample of individual curriculum planning for recent and current pupils and met with their teachers.
- Account was taken of a small number of free-text responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, alongside the school's own parent surveys taken when pupils leave the school. Inspectors also considered 10 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to the pupils' questionnaire, but the school's recent pupils had completed reviews, and inspectors considered these.

Inspection team

Linda Jacobs, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Emma Phillips

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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