

Inspection of an outstanding school: Riddlesdown Collegiate

Honister Heights, Purley, Surrey CR8 1EX

Inspection dates:

9 and 10 November 2021

Outcome

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?

Leaders and staff are proud to work here. They provide a rich curriculum and set high expectations for all pupils. Pupils are keen to do well. They enjoy their lessons and appreciate the support and encouragement they get from staff.

This is a large school and the school's 'college' system helps pupils feel part of a close community. Pupils said they quickly get to know others in their 'college'. They feel comfortable and safe. As one pupil said, expressing a view typical of many, 'It's like a second home.' Students in the sixth form enjoy the independence of their own college, called 'College VI'.

Pupils are encouraged to play an active part in school life. They have lots of opportunities to discover new interests and nurture their talents. Many pupils spoke excitedly about taking part in the upcoming school drama and music production, for example. Pupils like the wide range of clubs on offer, including dance and art. They also enjoy visits to local places of interest as well as residential trips abroad.

In general, pupils conduct themselves well and are polite. Staff take appropriate and prompt action to deal with any bullying.

Pupils benefit from the excellent facilities on offer. The creative and performing arts college, for example, has specialist resources to enhance learning. This includes an art gallery, dance studios and a theatre.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. Pupils from Years 7 to 11 study a wide range of subjects, including the creative arts and languages. Pupils in Year 7 enjoy the

'excellence curriculum'. Subjects such as history, geography and religious education are taught under a common theme, for example 'Journeys' and 'Transformation'. In the sixth form, leaders have extended the breadth of subjects on offer. The success of the sixth form is reflected in the increased number of students choosing to study here.

Pupils' learning is sequenced well. The order of learning helps pupils to build their knowledge and make connections with earlier learning. For example, in history, pupils in Years 7 to 9 learn about historical periods in chronological order. This helps them to understand the cause and effect of past events. In Latin, Year 9 pupils used what they learned in Year 7 about the Romans to understand different aspects of classical society across the Roman empire.

Staff have broken down pupils' learning into manageable chunks. They have identified the subject content that they want pupils to know and remember. In modern foreign languages, for example, pupils are drilled in using essential vocabulary and structures when writing sentences in French or Spanish. Pupils find this helpful and can construct increasingly complex sentences as a result.

Leaders make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can access the same curriculum as everyone else. They identify pupils' needs and work with teachers and learning support assistants to tailor learning for individual pupils. Pupils who need help with reading are supported through effective catch-up programmes. Staff encourage pupils to read for pleasure. 'Book Worm' lessons help pupils to read widely and reflect on books they have read.

Sometimes teachers do not make sure that pupils have a secure grasp of the essential subject knowledge they need. This stops some pupils from tackling more difficult work or moving on in their learning. They struggle to complete the work they are set or to understand key concepts.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Many teachers show expertise in their subject areas. They use this well to explain challenging concepts to pupils. Staff are well supported by leaders to develop their specialist knowledge.

Leaders are right to be proud of the wider development opportunities on offer at the school. All pupils have access to a range of extra-curricular activities. This includes a variety of sports, music ensembles and clubs, such as debating, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and engineering. The careers programme is well structured from Year 7 onwards. Sixth-form students value the extensive guidance and support offered by their personal tutors.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They take part readily in class discussions and work hard. Pupils in all year groups produce high-quality work and achieve well. On a few occasions, low-level disruption affects pupils' learning. Some teachers do not always challenge this well.

Leaders, including trustees and governors, have a clear oversight of the school's work. They monitor this closely and pinpoint areas for development. Staff like working here and

feel involved in making whole-school decisions. Leaders are considerate of staff well-being and help to minimise workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The members of the safeguarding team have the necessary expertise and protected time to carry out their duties effectively. They make sure that vulnerable pupils and their families get the right support. Staff know what to do and who to go to if they have any worries about pupils. They keep a close eye on pupils to pick up on potential concerns, such as changes in behaviour or attendance.

Pupils are taught about keeping themselves safe, including online. Work with the safer schools' officer helps pupils to understand local risks, such as knife crime. Pupils are also taught about healthy relationships and issues such as consent.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, teachers do not systematically assess pupils' understanding. They do not carefully check that pupils have secure knowledge of required subject content. Some pupils are unable to complete more complex work successfully because they do not have the required knowledge on which to build. Leaders should ensure that all teachers use assessment more effectively to pick up and address gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- Some staff do not routinely reinforce high standards of behaviour in lessons. Occasionally, low-level disruption is tolerated. Leaders should ensure that all teachers apply the behaviour expectations consistently and effectively.

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 as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in May 2016.

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	138178
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10202702
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2069
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	434
Appropriate authority	The Collegiate Trust
Chair of trust	Philip Hogan
Principal	Soumick Dey
Website	www.riddlesdown.org
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The number of students in the sixth form has increased significantly since the previous inspection.
- The school is divided into a number of smaller 'colleges'. Each 'college' has its own headteacher and team of staff.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision for their pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors have discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, senior school leaders and other school leaders, including those responsible for SEND. Inspectors also met with representatives from the trust and the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history, art, computing and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Other subjects were considered as well.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, staff and pupils about the safeguarding arrangements at the school, and checked the single central record. Inspectors also reviewed safeguarding records and referrals.
- Inspectors met with a group of non-teaching staff and held informal and formal discussions with pupils.
- Inspectors considered the survey responses of parents, staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Jude Wilson, lead inspector

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