

Inspection of Link Secondary School

82-86 Croydon Road, Beddington, Croydon, Surrey CR0 4PD

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 January 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils really like coming to school. Staff know all pupils very well. They make sure that what pupils learn is meaningful and enjoyable.

Pupils are keen to learn. They are kept safe in school and trust staff to help them with any problems that they may have. Pupils get on well with each other. They share equipment sensibly. Pupils said that bullying is not an issue here. Leaders keep appropriate records of any issues that arise and deal with them promptly.

Staff are committed to making sure that everything that happens in school takes into account pupils' future lives and their transition to adulthood. Pupils are taught a broad range of subjects and they achieve well. Staff are well trained and know how to support each pupil's social and communication needs.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils rise to these. Pupils respond well to the praise and rewards they receive for meeting leaders' expectations. Pupils try hard to be kind and supportive of one another. They are enthusiastic about taking on responsibility, for example in helping to run the tuck shop. When pupils become upset or anxious, staff know exactly how to help them to stay calm and return to their learning.

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

Leaders make sure that pupils study a wide range of subjects. Leaders have thought about the knowledge they want pupils to know and remember in each year group, including in the sixth form. Pupils' learning is well sequenced. Teaching routinely revisits important subject content. This helps pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding effectively over time. Staff know pupils well. They have the expertise to help pupils learn well and make progress through the curriculum.

Leaders have given careful thought to how pupils' all-round development is promoted. What pupils learn in different subjects is supported by well-planned additional sessions, including therapies. These focus on each pupil's most important next steps. Leaders make sure that everything that happens in school is checked carefully and makes a difference to pupils' learning and development. Pupils' personal, social and emotional development are clear priorities. Staff are skilled in helping pupils to become increasingly confident and independent in a range of social situations.

Leaders understand the importance of pupils becoming fluent readers. Pupils typically enjoy reading. The curriculum is planned to ensure that pupils read a range of texts and build up their reading skills well. However, sometimes pupils are not motivated to practise their reading outside of lessons. Work to increase pupils' love of reading is already underway, including plans for a new school library later this year.

Staff accurately assess what pupils know, remember and can do. Leaders bring together the wide range of assessment information and use this to meet pupils' future needs. Parents and carers are kept well informed about all areas of their children's development.

Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They have positive attitudes to learning. Even when things get tricky, pupils persevere and try their best. Pupils are respectful to staff and to each other. The school council is just one example of pupils being able to share their views about the school and feel listened to. Staff have an in-depth understanding of what works well in meeting pupils' needs. They know the best ways to support each pupil to manage their feelings and behaviours. This means that there is very little disruption to learning.

Staff use well-planned opportunities to promote pupils' personal development. Some lessons happen outside school. These are planned to help pupils show and practise what they know and can do in different environments. Pupils are taught how to manage independently in a range of circumstances. Pupils also learn about themselves and others. Staff encourage pupils to reflect on their identity and to respect differences. Pupils enjoy a range of clubs and extra-curricular activities, including in the sixth form. Examples of these include activities for music and sports, as well as animal care and horse riding.

In the sixth form, leaders arrange for students to spend some of their time at a college to prepare them for the next steps in their education. Pupils learn about the different options open to them for when they leave this school. For most, this is after sixth form. They receive individual and impartial advice and guidance about careers.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained and supported. This helps to ensure that everyone understands the part they play in helping pupils to learn and develop. Staff said that leaders consider their workload and that it is manageable.

The trust and governors have well-established systems in place to check leaders' work. Governors work closely with leaders and visit the school regularly. Staff attend governing body meetings to share evidence of their work. This helps governors to obtain an accurate picture of the school's strengths and of what needs to be developed further.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are well trained and knowledgeable about all aspects of safeguarding. They are aware of pupils' needs and how they may be at increased vulnerability to harm. Staff know what signs and behaviours to look out for, and report any concerns that they have. This enables leaders to put in place additional help and support as soon as it is needed. This includes making use of the services of outside agencies.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in different situations. Teachers help pupils to understand boundaries and how to identify possible problems and dangers when out in the community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, pupils lack the motivation to use their reading skills beyond the classroom. This limits their exposure to a wide range of high-quality texts. Leaders should continue their work to raise the profile of reading and encourage pupils to read widely and for pleasure.

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	144852
Local authority	Sutton
Inspection number	10200566
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special 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	66
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	13
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Julia James
Headteacher	Sandy Turner
Website	www.linksec.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Link Secondary School is a special school that caters for pupils aged 11 to 19. Pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties and/or a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Link Secondary School became an academy within the Orchard Hill College Academy Trust in July 2017. When the predecessor school, also known as Link Secondary School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be inadequate.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 13 receive information about the full range of education and training options open to them. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher and deputy headteachers. Inspectors also met with members of the governing body and with the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and humanities. Inspectors visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning and met with subject leaders and teachers. Inspectors also considered other subjects. For instance, they looked at subject plans for science and art.
- Through discussions with leaders, governors, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how pupils are safeguarded. Inspectors looked at records related to safeguarding, including records of pre-employment checks on staff.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils in all key stages. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about safeguarding, behaviour and their workload. Inspectors also looked at the responses from pupils, staff and parents to Ofsted's surveys, including Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Mark Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Teresa Neary	Ofsted Inspector
Madeleine Gerard	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gary Rawlings	Her Majesty's 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 2022