

Inspection of Fernways School

Hatton Hill, Windlesham, Surrey GU20 6AB

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 July 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Fernways school is a safe and happy place. Pupils trust adults to look after them and help them learn. They treat each other and their teachers with kindness and courtesy. They are proud of each other's achievements. Over time, they learn to make good choices about their own behaviour. Bullying is extremely rare because pupils are respectful of each other.

Leaders have quickly established a warm and purposeful atmosphere in the school. Some parents reflect how coming to Fernways has been 'life-changing' for their children. Pupils who have been absent from education for a sustained period now come to school regularly. This helps to raise their self-esteem, as well as increase their knowledge.

Leaders understand pupils' needs very well. They want them to be confident and successful learners, equipped to face the world. Everything they do is focused on this goal. Staff carry out their work with a common sense of purpose. Their caring persistence helps pupils to engage with learning and become more resilient. As a result, pupils gain useful knowledge about the world around them and the subjects that they study.

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

Pupils join the school at different times and often with large gaps in their prior learning. Some have been away from formal education for several months or more and are not used to daily school routines and interacting with others. Leaders quickly gather a wealth of information that helps them understand each pupil's needs, working with families, local authorities and other relevant professionals. They take careful account of pupils' education, health and care plans. As a result, they are able to help pupils settle quickly into school life and learning.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of the school's ethos. This is embodied by the 'Triple Cs' – creativity, community and confidence – which are threaded through the subjects that pupils learn. 'Lifeskills' and social skills work complement the well-planned curriculum for personal, social and health education. Careers information helps pupils to think about their future options. Leaders' plans to develop independent careers advice and guidance as the school expands into key stage 4 take appropriate account of both government requirements and best practice.

Leaders make effective use of the local community to help pupils develop their social, moral and cultural understanding. For example, visits to the local shops help pupils learn about money and practise interacting with unfamiliar adults, which prepares them for a more independent future life. A wealth of trips, visitors and extra-curricular activities broaden pupils' life experiences and deepen their knowledge of different cultures and faiths. Pupils develop a clear understanding of

how to make safe and healthy choices for themselves, such as around diet, exercise, relationships and when using the internet.

Leaders are aspirational for pupils' futures. They have identified relevant qualifications that will enable pupils to move on to appropriate education, employment or training at the end of Year 11. Currently, all pupils are in key stage 2 or 3. The curriculum is giving them a broad foundation of subject knowledge on which to build in the future. Leaders' plans to develop the curriculum into key stage 4 are appropriate. They are mindful of the need to deliberately incorporate opportunities for pupils' ongoing wider development as well as the subject knowledge that pupils will need to gain accredited qualifications.

Reading is a central feature of the school's work. Leaders' work in this area is determined and effective. Pupils get the support that they need to read accurately, fluently and with confidence. Staff provide consistent and high-quality support to those pupils who most need to get better at reading. As a result, pupils are able to engage successfully with the broader curriculum.

Fernways has grown rapidly since it opened in September 2021, with many pupils and staff joining within the last few weeks. Senior leaders are driving the school forward with purpose, bringing staff seamlessly on board. Some other leaders are relatively new in their posts. As such, their work and its impact are evolving as they become more familiar with the specifics of this specialist setting. Staff are highly positive about the training and support they receive when they join the school, which enables them to do their very best for pupils.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher know their school extremely well. The proprietor body supports them effectively in checking how things are going and what needs to improve. Useful expertise from Kedleston staff helps leaders to check that the independent school standards are met consistently. Leaders are reflective and accurate about aspects of the school that are not quite as well established as others at this relatively early stage.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils are safe and feel safe. Adults know them very well and are alert to potential concerns. Well-established routines keep all staff informed of relevant information about pupils. This helps leaders to act quickly if worries emerge. Where needed, leaders work persistently with local authorities to get help for pupils and their families. Leaders' safeguarding records are suitable and were strengthened during the inspection.

Learning to stay safe is an important part of the school's curriculum. Leaders have correctly identified where pupils may need extra help to understand risks and make decisions that keep them safe. This help is built into their learning across the curriculum.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum is evolving as increasing numbers of pupils, teachers and subject leaders join the school. Consequently, the precision of curriculum planning is not fully and consistently developed across all subjects and phases. As pupils move towards key stage 4, leaders should ensure that curriculum planning across all subjects identifies deliberate opportunities for pupils' holistic development, as well as preparing pupils for relevant qualifications.
- Some leaders are relatively new in their posts. As yet, their understanding of this specialist setting is still developing. Senior leaders should continue to develop the knowledge and capacity of the wider leadership team so that there is an increasingly shared responsibility for ongoing school improvement.

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 provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	148631
DfE registration number	936/6051
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10232336
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	19
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kedleston Group Limited
Chair	Paul Brosnan
Headteacher	Hannah Stroud
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,795
Telephone number	01276 402 131
Website	www.kedlestongroup.com/schools/fernways-school/home
Email address	fernways@kedlestongroup.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Fernways School opened to pupils in September 2021. It is a small, mixed independent special school for pupils with autism spectrum disorder and other associated needs. All pupils have education, health and care plans and are referred to the school by their local authority.
- Fernways is part of Kedleston Group Limited, which owns and operates several other similar schools across England. Kedleston also runs a small number of care homes and residential schools.
- The school is based on the site of a former nursery and pre-school. Fernways has sole occupancy of the building and the outside space behind it. Pupils make use of facilities in the local community as part of some of their learning.
- Pupils receive all of their education at Fernways. The school does not use any alternative provisions.
- Fernways does not have any particular religious denomination. The school's ethos is around providing a safe, nurturing place where pupils can re-engage with education, learning vital knowledge and skills that prepare them for a successful future life.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

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

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and a number of teaching and support staff. They spoke to pupils, with adults present, and to three parents on the telephone. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the Kedleston Group.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into reading, mathematics, physical education and 'lifeskills'. They talked to leaders about the curriculum in these subjects. They visited lessons, talked to pupils and looked at their work.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements were scrutinised. Inspectors reviewed the central record of recruitment checks on adults working in the school. They considered safeguarding policies and practice, including record-keeping. They

tested out the culture of safeguarding in the school by talking to pupils, staff and leaders.

- Inspectors toured the school site to check compliance with the independent school standards. They reviewed a range of other relevant documents, including those on the school's website.
- Inspectors took into account 18 responses to the staff questionnaire and 15 responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Kathryn Moles, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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