

Inspection of Knowl Hill School

School Lane, Pirbright, Woking, Surrey GU24 0JN

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 November 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 Good

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and well cared for at Knowl Hill School. Pupils value the personalised support they receive. This helps them to manage their dyslexia and associated needs very well. A combination of targeted therapies and an academic curriculum that is carefully matched to pupils' learning needs helps pupils to do well.

Pupils' behaviour is usually very positive because staff understand pupils' individual needs well. Adults help pupils to unpick the root cause of any negative behaviour, so that pupils are typically able to stay calm and focused. Pupils are helped to understand how to communicate effectively, so that they rarely fall out. Any bullying is dealt with swiftly.

Pupils are friendly with each other. They learn to play well with each other in the junior school and to socialise sensibly as they get older. They enjoy practising for the school drama productions and trips into the local forest and to see a pantomime.

Relationships with adults are warm and caring and help children to thrive. One parent summed up the views of many parents and carers by saying, 'The school's personal touch gives it a family feel and everyone is nurturing, compassionate and understanding.'

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

In both the junior and senior phases of the school, leaders have thought carefully about what pupils should learn and in what order. The curriculum focuses primarily on English, mathematics, science, and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils also learn other subjects, such as history, food technology, art and physical education. In key stage 4, leaders make sure that pupils are able to study additional subjects in which they are particularly interested. For example, this year, some pupils are taking GCSEs in computing and citizenship.

In some subjects, such as science, the curriculum is organised to build knowledge from when pupils join in the junior phase to when they leave at the end of Year 11. However, this is not the case in some other subjects. This creates the potential for gaps in pupils' knowledge to be created because staff teaching older pupils do not know what pupils have previously learned. This makes it harder for staff to identify any gaps and to close them quickly.

The on-site therapeutic provision is seamlessly woven into pupils' daily learning. All pupils receive a range of therapies, which are based on the requirements in their education, health and care plans. Pupils value greatly the time that therapists take to understand their needs and help them manage their lives. Pupils know that if they are struggling with learning in lessons, therapists and the counsellor will help teachers adapt their teaching, so that pupils learn successfully. This is a strength of the school. It has been of particular benefit recently because it has helped some

new teachers get to grips quickly with pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils' learning is not disrupted by changing teachers.

Leaders' ambition for pupils when they join the school is to reignite a passion for learning. They recognise that before attending this school, pupils have struggled to learn in other settings. Several pupils have had long periods out of education. Teachers make sure that learning is as interactive and practical as possible, especially in the junior phase. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They are increasingly expert at breaking learning down into manageable chunks, and recapping what is taught so that it is truly remembered.

Developing strong reading and writing skills is increasingly at the core of the school's work to help pupils succeed. Staff use individually tailored approaches to fill pupils' gaps in knowledge and to promote a love of reading and writing. Rightly, leaders plan to streamline their approach and make sure that recent initiatives, such as teachers reading to children at the start of the day, have the positive impact they intend.

Pupils' personal development is carefully planned for through PSHE and lessons that focus on preparing pupils for leaving the school. Leaders are rightly both proactive and reactive in what they choose to teach pupils about the world around them, so that they are well prepared for their next stage. Careers education is particularly well designed to build pupils' awareness of the choices they have for post-16 education, and to help them prepare for applying to and attending college.

Those responsible for governance accept that while they have been very supportive of the school and involved in ensuring its positive ethos, they have not challenged sharply enough the effectiveness and impact of leaders' work. Governors have recognised this and have quickly reorganised how the school runs. Governors continue to sharpen their strategic oversight of the school to ensure that the school meets consistently the requirements of the independent school standards (the standards). Their ability to be effective was evidenced during the inspection when issues around a couple of standards that were not fully met at the start of the inspection were quickly rectified.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have recently set up new systems and processes to make sure that safeguarding and recruitment procedures are robust. These are working well. Designated safeguarding leads and other staff are well trained and alert to the signs that might indicate that a child is at risk of harm. Adults liaise well with parents, local safeguarding partners and other agencies to help keep children safe.

Staff create a culture of safeguarding by knowing and understanding pupils well, and how daily life might affect pupils' anxieties and behaviour. Regular lessons in how to react in a range of circumstances help pupils navigate the world safely.

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

- Changes to leadership and staffing have necessitated an overhaul of some management systems. Those responsible for governance should ensure that the effectiveness of these changes are checked robustly, so that new systems are thoroughly embedded and the school runs consistently well.
- Leaders have not made sure that the curriculum flows smoothly from the junior to secondary phase. This makes it harder for staff to identify where pupils' gaps in learning are developing and to close those gaps quickly, including in reading. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is sequenced to build pupils' learning securely from the start of the junior phase to the end of the secondary phase in all subjects.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	125436
DfE registration number	936/6554
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10214650
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	62
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Knowl Hill Foundation
Chair	Norma Todd
Headteacher	Kas Govender
Annual fees (day pupils)	£23,793 to £30,114
Telephone number	01483 797032
Website	www.knowlhillschool.org.uk
Email address	office@khs.education
Date of previous inspection	7 to 9 November 2017

Information about this school

- Knowl Hill School is an independent day special school for pupils with specific learning difficulties, principally dyslexia. Pupils may also have social and communication needs, dyspraxia, autism spectrum disorder or other associated difficulties.
- The headteacher took up his post in September 2022. He was previously the deputy headteacher.
- The school uses two registered and one unregistered provider of alternative provision.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was operating beyond its registration agreement with the Department for Education, as it is recorded on the GIAS (Get Information About Schools) website, because it has exceeded the maximum number of pupils on roll that it is registered to admit.

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 had 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other school leaders and members of the proprietorial body, who are known as governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, art and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to pupils about their learning in other subjects and visited a sample of lessons in the broader curriculum.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record of employment checks and some behaviour, attendance and safeguarding records. Inspectors met with safeguarding leaders and staff to discuss their approach to keeping children safe.
- Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils about the provision for personal development, careers education and behaviour. Inspectors also met with some therapists to explore the impact of their work.

- Inspectors spoke with representatives of two of the alternative provisions that the school uses.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s confidential surveys for staff, pupils and parents. This included considering the free-text comments parents had made.
- Minor discrepancies relating to the accurate recording of checks on the single central record and the availability of some policies on the school’s website were rectified during the inspection.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Maxine McDonald-Taylor

Ofsted Inspector

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