

Inspection of a good school: The Gatwick School

23 Gatwick Road, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 9TP

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 January 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has been through a significant period of change. Leaders are establishing new routines and expectations as the school community continues to adapt to the all-through school structure and curriculum. Students and staff say that they have seen positive improvements, particularly in behaviour, since the arrival of the new headteacher.

Overall, pupils behave well. However, a number of pupils in both phases report that disruptive behaviour can sometimes affect learning in lessons. Most pupils like coming to school and develop positive relationships with their teachers. Children in the early years share warm and trusting relationships with their teachers. Bullying is not common but does happen at times. Teachers respond quickly when it is reported. However, some pupils say that actions are not always robust enough to make it stop immediately.

Pupils are proud that their school is inclusive and diverse. They respect each other's views and differences. Leaders promote awareness of culture and tolerance through pupil-led assemblies, for example about racism. Many pupils value the school's role as a 'rights respecting school' in caring for others. For instance, older pupils act as buddies for those in the primary phase.

Leaders have organised an interesting and broad range of clubs for pupils to enjoy across all phases, for example mindfulness and eco clubs. However, leaders need to take further steps to ensure that those pupils who would benefit the most attend. Pupils in the secondary school learn about post-16 options but say that they would benefit from more personalised advice about their next steps.

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

Leaders have worked to implement a well-sequenced 'all through' curriculum which allows pupils to build on their learning over time. However, there are still small gaps in some subjects that leaders are continuing to address. Where plans have been reviewed, what pupils must know and remember is clearly identified from Reception to Year 11. The key stage 3 curriculum has recently been reorganised so that the curriculum is now broad and balanced across all phases. Leaders know that the number of pupils achieving the English Baccalaureate is currently lower than it should be. They are working to improve outcomes in languages and humanities to increase this figure. The curriculum is equally as ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders have strong subject knowledge and are working to further develop subject expertise within their departments. Those who are responsible for early reading have ensured that staff are well trained to deliver the newly implemented phonics programme skilfully. In some subjects, where teaching is more precise, teachers use key vocabulary to strengthen pupils' understanding. However, this is not always consistent practice in all lessons. In a small number of lessons, misconceptions are not always addressed swiftly so that pupils make sufficient progress. Pupils with SEND receive the adaptations and support that they need to access the curriculum alongside their peers.

Assessment is not yet consistently effective in all subjects. In some lessons, teachers do not check for gaps in learning frequently enough. Pupils do not always receive the timely and specific feedback that they need to improve.

Children in Reception settle well and grasp the routines and expectations for learning quickly. They begin learning phonics from the start. The phonics books that pupils in Reception and key stage 1 read are well matched to the sounds that they have learned. However, a number of pupils are behind in their phonics learning. Leaders are addressing this through a range of interventions for those who need more support to catch up. Systems for monitoring reading progress in the secondary school are less well developed. New plans have recently been introduced so that pupils who find reading difficult get the important help that they need.

Most pupils want to learn and engage well in their learning. A small number of pupils in key stage 4 demonstrate less positive behaviour in some lessons. New leaders have raised expectations for behaviour and are focused on developing high aspirations. The newly introduced 'TGS Rights' have had a notable impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes, particularly in the primary phase. However, there is still work to be done to embed these more widely for the benefit of all.

Many pupils enjoy school, although too many do not attend regularly enough. Leaders have not acted as quickly or robustly as they should to improve the attendance of those who are persistently absent. Newly implemented plans to address this have not yet had sufficient time to have a positive impact.

Pupils benefit from opportunities to enrich their learning of the curriculum through trips, for example to Iceland and the theatre. They develop leadership skills through principal

pupil roles and as part of the pupil council. They understand the positive impact they can make as active citizens through fundraising for a local charity for the homeless.

The personal, social and health education curriculum is well structured so that pupils revisit topics such as e-safety and consent in an age-appropriate way. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about issues that affect them in their local context.

The trust has continued to guide the school through a period of turbulence in leadership and governance. However, they know that there are still significant improvements to be made in some areas, including outcomes. They have much confidence in the new headteacher and senior leaders to continue to take swift and decisive action for the benefit of all pupils. Some staff, who have experienced much change in recent years, say that workload is too high. However, the majority are committed to working together to ensure that the success of The Gatwick School as an all-through school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained to identify signs of harm and report any concerns quickly. Leaders monitor those children who they are worried about closely and seek the help of external agencies when needed. Records show that appropriate checks are carried out so that all adults who work in the school are safe to work with children.

The curriculum is planned so that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils know who they can report their concerns to when they are worried. They trust staff to keep them safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment and feedback are not consistently timely or effective in order to help pupils improve. Leaders need to ensure that subject leaders have the time and capacity to monitor and improve assessment practice across their subjects so that pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve.
- Too many pupils do not attend school frequently enough. Leaders need to ensure that swift and robust action is taken so that pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, receive the support and intervention that they might need to attend school more often so that they access the intended curriculum fully.
- Records for behaviour do not show a coherent summary of the most serious incidents, or the impact of any actions taken to reduce future reoccurrence. Leaders need to ensure that succinct chronologies are kept so that they can identify the effectiveness of any sanctions, including fixed-term suspensions, and adapt their approach as necessary.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2017.

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.

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

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| Unique reference number | 141038 |
| Local authority | West Sussex |
| Inspection number | 10227884 |
| Type of school | All-through |
| School category | Academy free school |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 940 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Antony Blaker, QPM |
| Headteacher | Simon Firth |
| Website | www.thegatwickschool.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 17 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Aurora Academies Trust.
- The trust has implemented an interim executive board to develop the governance of the school.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses alternative provision from three registered providers.
- There is a before- and after-school club on site which is run by a separate provider.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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.
- The inspection team completed deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history and modern foreign languages.

- To do this, they met with subject leaders, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons, and looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, a selection of subject leaders, teachers, and support staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with the members of the Aurora Academies Trust, including the chair of the board of trustees. They also met with the interim executive board.
- The inspection team reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising records and through discussions with staff and pupils.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions and a review of Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Zoë Harris, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sara Wakefield

Ofsted Inspector

Richard Carlyle

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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