

Inspection of a good school: Woolmer Hill School

Woolmer Hill, Woolmer Hill Road, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 1QB

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 January 2023

Outcome

Woolmer Hill School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders' vision for the curriculum is ambitious. They want pupils to develop a genuine interest in their subjects, as well as gaining the qualifications they need. This mission to inspire is shared by teachers across the school. Pupils study a broad and well-sequenced curriculum, and most are very successful in public examinations. Extra-curricular opportunities are wide-ranging. Consequently, pupils can explore different interests, develop talents and prepare meaningfully for their next steps. Leaders ensure that these opportunities are inclusive.

There is a happy atmosphere in this school. Staff know pupils well and care about them. Relationships are overwhelmingly positive. The values of 'proud to belong, proud to achieve' are reflected in pupils' behaviour generally and in how they approach their work. Bullying is rare but staff deal with it swiftly and effectively if needed. Pupils feel safe in school. They feel supported and listened to by staff. They would happily go to staff with any worries. The majority of parents are very positive about the school. They feel their children are flourishing. One parent described the school as having 'a family approach', a view mirrored by staff and pupils during the inspection.

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

Leaders are aspirational for all pupils. However, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not always achieve as highly as their peers. The persistent absence of some pupils prevents them doing as well as they could. Leaders have started to address this issue. They have introduced new ways to support pupils with low attendance, including those with SEND and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Early indicators are that these are beginning to have an impact on attendance and on the progress these pupils make. In school, staff receive high-quality training and information about pupils' needs and how to help them. Most teachers use this well to support all pupils to access their lessons, no matter what their backgrounds.

Leaders review the curriculum offer regularly. Growth in pupil numbers has enabled leaders to introduce additional and ambitious key stage 4 options. The numbers of pupils taking GCSEs, including in languages and triple science, are also increasing. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They use real-world examples to bring learning to life. This helps to inspire pupils' enthusiasm for their subjects. Generally, teachers introduce new learning clearly and check pupils' understanding individually and regularly. They select appropriate activities and feedback so that pupils learn to apply knowledge with increasing fluency. Just occasionally, expectations of pupils' work and answers could be higher. Leaders know this and are acting to address this.

Reading is given a high priority. Staff explore a range of varied texts with pupils. This means that many pupils are enthusiastic readers. Leaders have recently reviewed the provision for pupils who need extra support with reading. Once gaps are identified, specific interventions are implemented which help them catch up.

Leaders have high expectations for behaviour. They have acted decisively to address some issues as pupils returned from the national lockdowns, during which schools were only open to some pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions. Consequently, pupils are overwhelmingly respectful and polite. Most behaviour is excellent, especially in lessons where clear routines are embedded. Staff implement systems and provide additional behaviour support consistently and fairly across the school.

The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is thorough. It is informed by pupil voice and addresses issues such as misogyny and sexualised language. Pupils can recall and discuss the key PSHE education messages. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, are well prepared for their future. Careers education is well organised. It benefits from links with colleges, sixth forms and employers, as well as apprenticeships providers and higher education.

Staff greatly enjoy working at the school. Governors and leaders have taken practical steps to reduce workload and establish a positive and respectful working environment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and those responsible for governance have established a strong safeguarding culture at the school. This is underpinned by appropriate policies and systems. Leaders are diligent about making the required checks on all staff. The designated safeguarding lead is knowledgeable and provides clear direction and comprehensive training for all staff. In turn, staff are vigilant. They report concerns about pupils swiftly. Safeguarding leaders take appropriate action when a pupil needs help. They make and pursue referrals to external partners tenaciously. The curriculum helps pupils understand how to navigate different risks. Pupils feel safe in school. Parents confirm this also.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The attendance of some pupils is too low. Many of these pupils are from disadvantaged backgrounds or are pupils with SEND. As a result, they do not achieve as well as they could and do not benefit from the school's wider provision. The trust and school have already identified this as a focus area to improve. In the context of a growing school, and challenging national circumstances, leaders should continue their work to embed fully new approaches to improving attendance and inclusion.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2014.

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

Unique reference number	137314
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10256518
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	859
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ralph Johnson
Headteacher	Clare Talbot
Website	www.woolmerhill.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Weydon Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school currently uses three registered alternative providers.
- 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 education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders from the school, representatives from the trust board and local governance and staff from the trust, including the CEO of the MAT.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, science, geography and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders,

visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including governor minutes, policies and records for behaviour management, attendance and bullying. Inspectors also reviewed documents relating to the alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils at different times during the school day, including form time, assemblies and breaktimes- and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils from different year groups and considered their responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator to discuss the provision for pupils with SEND. During the lessons visited, they looked at the support that pupils with SEND were receiving.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey. They took account of the responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Mary Davies, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Hanlon

Ofsted Inspector

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