

Inspection of West Hill School

Kingston Road, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 7PW

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish in this exceptional and supportive school community. They benefit from the nurturing and warm relationships they have with staff. Pupils trust the adults they work with because of these relationships. They feel safe to explore and learn in the calm and inclusive environment that staff create for them. Pupils are enthusiastic and inquisitive. The highly bespoke support that staff provide helps pupils to be resilient and independent learners.

A sense of ambition pervades the school. Pupils have the support they need to achieve their best. Their personal development is at the heart of everything that takes place at school. Pupils learn how to be positive members of the school and local community. They value and are proud of the leadership roles they have in their classrooms. Pupils know the importance of being kind and respectful and they celebrate each other when they show these values.

Pupils' behaviour is extremely good in lessons and at breaktimes. On the rare occasions when pupils find it hard to regulate their emotions, staff support them with sensitivity and skill. Pupils recognise the high expectations that staff have for them. They rise to these in their work and behaviour.

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

Leaders have an unwavering commitment to provide the very best education so that all pupils will achieve their potential. They have securely put in place an innovative and well-sequenced curriculum. In Reception, teachers spark the curiosity of children through activities that are very well planned. Staff in Reception teach children the knowledge they will need to be ready to learn as they move through the school. Children learn about number and early mathematical concepts. They also start to learn the letters and sounds they need to be able to read. Teachers plan enriching activities within Reception that develop children's love of learning.

Staff have expert knowledge of the subjects they teach and of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They make skilful changes to lesson activities to ensure they meet the varied needs of pupils. Learning is carefully adapted for all pupils. Teachers use the precise knowledge set out in the curriculum to ensure lessons are accessible and ambitious for all. As a result, pupils achieve exceptionally well.

Leaders have ensured that reading is fundamental at West Hill School. All staff have received high-quality training and are expert teachers of phonics. Teachers accurately assess pupils' phonics knowledge to spot when they need extra support. They use assessment information to put in place highly effective extra activities. Consequently, pupils learn to read very well. There is an obvious love of reading in this school. From Reception onwards, teachers share stories, rhymes and songs that inspire pupils to learn new words and read.

Leaders are dedicated in their efforts to ensure all pupils succeed, both personally and academically. The SEND and well-being team designs bespoke therapeutic packages of support. Termly targets are extremely well written and specific. They are broken into small and ambitious steps to help pupils to meet the outcomes in their education, health and care plans.

Leaders have the highest expectations for behaviour in the school. Staff are exceptionally well trained to support pupils with their behaviour. They create the optimum sensory and therapeutic environment that helps pupils to feel calm and focused. From Reception onwards, staff expertly teach pupils rules and routines. Pupils move around the school and between activities with thoughtfulness for others.

Leaders' planning for pupils' personal development is excellent. All pupils take part in a rich programme of activities. This includes life-skills sessions in the community, sports and music clubs and residential opportunities. In addition, staff have created the West Hill '50 things to achieve' programme. It contains enriching activities to give pupils the experiences they need to be ready for life beyond school, for example 'make something we can eat ourselves' or 'visit and use a recycling bank'. From Reception onwards, pupils learn what difference means. As they move through the school, they learn about various types of cultures and ways of living. They know that people have different views and they are respectful of this.

Governors and trustees are highly knowledgeable and experienced. They provide impactful support and challenge at all levels to ensure leadership is effective. Leaders have created a cohesive and common purpose for all staff in the school. Staff are very motivated and feel incredibly valued in the work they do. Leaders have built collaborative partnerships with parents. They actively seek parents' views to ensure the best possible provision is in place for all pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a high priority in the school. Staff are well trained to be alert to signs that a pupil may be at risk. They take swift action to share any concerns with leaders. Leaders show tenacity when dealing with safeguarding situations. They work well with external agencies to get the right support in place for pupils and their families.

Leaders make appropriate checks on all adults who work at the school. Record-keeping is robust and shows the effective actions that leaders take to keep pupils safe. Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

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	144228
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10268059
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	150
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ian Stuart Wilson
Principal	Abigail Slade
Website	www.westhillschool.uk
Dates of previous inspection	20 and 21 April 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- West Hill School provides specialist support for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and additional learning barriers such as autism spectrum disorder, medical needs, and speech, language and communication needs. All pupils attending the school have an education, health and care plan.
- West Hill was initially part of the Learning and Inspiration for Tomorrow (LIFT) partnership when it became an academy in October 2017. The LIFT partnership subsequently merged with The Howard Partnership Trust in March 2021.
- The school does not currently make use of alternative education provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the principal and other members of the leadership team. The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and three other members of the governing body. The lead inspector also met with the chair of trustees and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, religious education and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils in lessons and during playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school, their school improvement plan and minutes from governors' and trustees' meetings.
- Inspectors took into account the views of parents and carers through their responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors took account of the views of staff through conversations and the responses to the online staff survey.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements in the school by speaking with leaders, staff and pupils. They met with the designated safeguarding leads to discuss the arrangements for safeguarding. During these meetings, the lead inspector scrutinised records and sampled case files to explore how the school identifies and supports pupils at risk of harm. Inspectors also examined the school's work to recruit and check on the suitability of staff as well as checking staff's knowledge of their responsibilities.

Inspection team

Nina Marabese, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tom Neave

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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