

Inspection of a good school: Children's Support Service Langdon Hills Basildon

High Road, Langdon Hills, Basildon, Essex SS16 6HG

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 May 2023

Outcome

Children's Support Service Langdon Hills Basildon continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have a positive experience at the Children's Support Service. Many join having experienced significant disruption in their previous schooling. The service helps them to re-connect with education and achieve well.

Pupils understand the high expectations staff have for their conduct. Pupils are taught how to make positive decisions about their behaviour. The longer they remain with the school, the better they behave. Pupils put this down to the consistently calm and patient approach of the adults working with them.

Pupils feel safe and well looked after. They forge trusting relationships with other pupils and with adults. Staff are swift to stop any rare incidents of bullying that occur.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Each follows a programme closely matched to their individual needs and capabilities. Pupils respond well to the ambitious, interesting learning activities offered in lessons. Most pupils develop positive attitudes to and understand the value of learning. This includes developing a positive attitude to reading. For a few older pupils, this takes longer.

Pupils benefit from the extensive range of enrichment and careers opportunities. They become ambitious for their futures and develop a greater sense of self-worth. Many pupils, including those taught online, reintegrate successfully into mainstream education.

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

This highly regarded school's leaders and staff are committed to equipping pupils with the knowledge, character and skills to re-join mainstream education. The broad, ambitious curriculum reflects this commitment. In most subjects it is well designed and flexible enough to meet the needs of frequently changing pupil cohorts. Provision for pupils' personal development is threaded through the curriculum.

Staff work with parents, pupils, schools and external agencies to establish a detailed record of each pupil's needs and interests. These records are set out in 'pupil passports'. Staff draw up high-quality programmes to meet these needs. Staff regularly review and adapt each pupil's passport and provision. This helps pupils experience success and make good academic and social progress. Pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education.

Leaders have detailed what pupils should learn. In most subjects, curriculum plans are well organised and build up pupils' knowledge over time. Teachers understand pupils' needs and interests and provide them with interesting learning that builds on what they have previously studied. Teachers reinforce important knowledge. They check with care that pupils remember what they study. This helps pupils to fill gaps from their previously disrupted education and readies them to reintegrate into mainstream schools.

On occasion, curriculum content is not organised in such a coherent manner. Where this is the case, although teachers design interesting learning activities these do not enable the secure building of pupils' knowledge over time.

Leaders view reading as the key to pupils' success. This drives learning across the curriculum in the primary phase. Adults give pupils precise support to become fluent, confident readers. Adults make sure that pupils read books that interest them and include words and sounds that pupils know. Staff foster trusting relationships with pupils as they read together each day. Pupils gain confidence to read aloud. Teachers give pupils plenty of opportunities to practise their reading in other subjects too.

Reading also takes centre stage in the secondary English curriculum. In class, older pupils read and analyse a wide range of stories, poems and non-fiction. However, their enthusiasm for reading does not match that of younger pupils. Leaders have stepped up their focus on developing secondary-age pupils' reading across the curriculum. Well-trained staff use a wide range of strategies to develop reading skills. This work is still in development and leaders have not yet taken stock of what works best.

Adults are skilled at boosting pupils' confidence to cope with demanding academic work and new social situations. The school's personal, social and health education programme informs and reinforces this approach. Pupils gain a great deal from the counselling, theatre visits, work experience, trampolining, climbing and music they have access to.

Pupils say that their behaviour and attitudes to learning have improved a lot in their time with the service. Skilled staff support pupils to regulate their behaviour should the need arise. Inspectors saw plenty of evidence that pupils want to do well and, as one pupil commented, 'knuckle down to their work.' A carefully thought-out careers programme helps pupils to choose the next steps in their education wisely.

Leaders are experienced at leading and managing a complex multi-site school. They are considerate of staff workload when introducing or adapting school policies and practice. Members of the management committee provide leaders with well-informed support and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff understand pupils' vulnerabilities and the risks that they may face. Staff, including those teaching pupils online, are diligent in checking on pupils' well-being. Leaders are swift to act on any concerns staff report to them. Leaders act in pupils' best interest to draw on the support of external agencies.

Pupils learn important messages about keeping themselves safe, including online and when in the community. Pupils trust that adults will listen to them when they have a concern.

Leaders carry out and keep detailed records of checks on staff working at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, curriculum plans for what pupils should learn are not well sequenced. Where this is the case, while teachers choose to teach activities that interest pupils, these activities do not enable pupils to build up their knowledge securely over time. Leaders should make sure that the curriculum in each subject, and how it is taught, helps pupils to build on their previous studies.
- Older pupils do not develop the same level of enthusiasm for reading as their younger peers. Leaders have stepped up their work to ensure that the curriculum across all secondary subjects supports the development of pupils' reading. However, leaders have yet to review the impact of this work. Leaders should take stock of the strategies that staff have put in place and share good practice so that older pupils develop and sustain a love of reading.

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 November 2016.

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	136035
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10211033
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Jo Barak
Website	www.css-essex.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	23 and 24 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is based on two sites and also provides outreach work, including online education.
- All pupils attending the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school makes use of three unregistered providers of alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement 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 spent time at each of the school's two sites over the course of the inspection.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the heads of each school site, the head of primary provision, other senior leaders, teachers (including those providing online education) and support staff.

- Inspectors met with pupils from each key stage. Inspectors also observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime. An inspector also spoke with pupils online.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the management committee, including the chair of the committee.
- The lead inspector met with two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, food technology and mathematics. In each deep dive, inspectors spoke with leaders and teachers, looked at curriculum documentation, visited lessons, spoke with pupils and looked at examples of pupils' work. An inspector also spoke with leaders, looked at curriculum documentation, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work in a small number of other subjects.
- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of pre-appointment checks, looked at safeguarding documentation and spoke with staff, pupils and members of the management committee. The lead inspector spoke with representatives from providers of alternative provision and with representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in the responses to Ofsted's survey, Ofsted Parent View, and of two parents spoken with over the course of the inspection.
- Inspectors took into account evidence from the responses to Ofsted's survey of staff's opinions and from the responses to the school's own parent and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

John Lucas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Russell Ayling

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023