

Inspection of Sunnydown School

Portley House, 152 Whyteleafe Road, Caterham, Surrey CR3 5ED

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this inspirational and transformative school. They value the high ambitions that leaders have for them. Pupils flourish due to the high-quality guidance and support staff give them. Consequently, they are enthusiastic and focused learners. They have high aspirations for themselves and continually strive to do their best.

Pupils have excellent relationships with adults and each other in the school. They trust them and know that staff want the best for them. As a result, pupils eagerly take advantage of the superb range of learning and wider opportunities on offer. Whether through school landscaping projects, looking after the wallabies, or other volunteering activities, pupils make highly valuable contributions to their school and local community.

Pupils know the importance of helping others. In addition to acting as peer mentors, older pupils lead assemblies to motivate and inspire others to do their best. They act as role models by behaving consistently well. A sense of calm pervades the school. Pupils show respectful and considerate conduct both inside and outside of the classroom. They learn to be leaders, not only in a community, but also of themselves. They independently manage themselves and communicate well, so they are ready for the next stages in their lives.

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

Leaders show an absolute commitment to providing the best educational experience for pupils. They have created an inventive and ambitious curriculum, which sets out clearly what pupils will learn and when. Leaders have expertly balanced both the academic and personal learning for pupils. This means that pupils leave the school with the knowledge and skills they need to be ready for the next stage of their education. Teachers are highly skilled at planning lessons, helping pupils build knowledge over time. They are expert teachers for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and securely know how to support pupils to achieve their best.

Teachers and leaders regularly and precisely check how well pupils are learning. They use information from assessments to spot when a pupil may be falling behind. Teachers fine tune their planning and provide pupils with extra activities, which helps them to close gaps in their knowledge. As a result, pupils progress through the curriculum exceptionally well. External outcomes are very positive, and pupils successfully study a range of qualifications.

While most pupils are fluent readers, there are some pupils who arrive at the school with gaps in their reading knowledge. Expert phonics teachers use the school's chosen scheme and skilfully help pupils to be able to read. Due to the celebration of

books and stories around the school, pupils love to read widely and often. Staff actively encourage pupils to read a range of books that build their understanding of difference. This is part of a whole-school approach to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of this school. Pupils securely learn about careers from Year 7 onwards. They receive high-quality, independent advice and guidance to help them plan their career pathways. Leaders recognise that developing pupils' social, communication and interaction skills is paramount to their future success. The communication and interaction curriculum is expertly planned. In these lessons, pupils learn how to articulate their views and opinions clearly, as well as to respect those of others.

Leaders have carefully planned a rich set of wider opportunities for pupils. These are part of the innovative 'Friday curriculum'. Leaders have thought about the life and vocational experiences pupils need and have sequenced them across each year group. In key stage 4, pupils have a range of enrichment options they can choose. This includes a programme of activities at a local college. In addition to providing pupils with the opportunity to learn vocational skills such as construction or motor vehicle maintenance, this experience also supports pupils with their transition to further education.

Governors provide impactful support and challenge to make sure leadership is effective. Leaders do not stand still. They have a strong moral purpose and demonstrate a constant drive to improve to ensure the provision best meets the needs of all pupils. Leaders' vision motivates and inspires staff, who are proud to work at this school and appreciate how much leaders value them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a high priority in the school. They make appropriate checks on adults who work at the school. Staff are well trained and have secure knowledge of safeguarding. This means they quickly spot when a pupil or their family may need help. Leaders respond to concerns tenaciously and keep robust and detailed records.

Leaders work very well with external agencies, ensuring pupils and their families get the right support, at the right time. They are aware of the risks that pupils may face. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, both online and in the community.

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	125458
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10240106
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kevin Webster
Headteacher	Paul Jensen
Website	www.sunnydown.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 and 20 October 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Sunnydown School provides specialist support for pupils with speech, language and communication needs and autism spectrum disorder. All pupils attending the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 headteacher (by video call) and other members of the leadership team. The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and two

other members of the governing body. The lead inspector also met with a representative from the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading and communication, mathematics, food technology and personal, social, health and economics 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 play and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school, their school improvement plan and minutes from governors' 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 the knowledge of staff about their responsibilities.

Inspection team

Nina Marabese, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sue Bzikot

Ofsted Inspector

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