

# Inspection of a good school: Portesbery School

Newfoundland Road, Deepcut, Surrey GU16 6TA

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Inspection dates:

24 and 25 May 2023

## **Outcome**

Portesbery School continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

This is a happy school where everyone matters, and every voice is heard. Pupils arrive at school with smiles on their faces. They are happy, safe and well looked after. Staff care deeply about pupils and make it their mission to get to know each of them. They take a keen interest in pupils' likes and dislikes, and they learn what pupils need and when. The many different ways pupils communicate are understood and encouraged.

Every moment of every day is focused on learning. Staff exploit every opportunity to teach pupils important life skills. The lead inspector particularly enjoyed visiting assembly. Staff and pupils sang a song with accompanying actions. This helped pupils to understand the importance of staying safe in the summer months by encouraging them to wear hats and sun cream.

Pupils love to play at social times. They particularly enjoy riding bikes and scooters and using the playground equipment. The sensory trail is something many pupils enjoy. Pupils socialise and communicate with each other. Any form of unkindness is swiftly resolved by staff, who are on hand to help pupils understand what happened and give an apology.

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

Leaders have crafted a curriculum that caters well for pupils' individual needs. Staff gather a wide range of information about what pupils can do and what they still need to master. Pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan targets are embedded into pupils' educational programmes. Supporting pupils' communication underpins the success of the curriculum. Several approaches are used effectively, including visual timetables, symbols, signing and various devices such as electronic tablets. Overall, the curriculum is delivered well. However, leaders know that staff who are responsible for particular areas of the curriculum need to monitor their areas more effectively. This should ensure that the curriculum is embedded across every part of the school.

Staff are constantly developing a love of reading. Pupils enjoy listening to staff read to them. The teaching of early reading has improved recently. There is a much more consistent approach to helping pupils become successful with phonics. Some pupils are now able to recognise letters and their corresponding sounds. They are then able to blend the sounds together to read words.

Leaders have thought carefully about the different topics pupils will study and when. They have ensured that the building blocks are taught in early years and regularly revisited as pupils move through the school. Staff regularly check pupils' understanding and how much progress they are making. Pupils receive extra help with learning as and when they need it. This helps them to keep up. A range of suitable therapies are effectively integrated into pupils' timetables. For example, pupils respond well to the therapy dog and enjoy horse riding.

There is an emphasis on ensuring that what pupils learn is relevant and meaningful, for example through visits to local cafes where pupils can practise what they have learned at school. During the inspection, sixth-form students used their functional literacy and numeracy skills while selling items from the tuck shop trolley. This not only helped to replicate the skills needed when buying things in a shop, but it also gave them a taste of what it is like to work.

Learning through different experiences enriches the curriculum. There are many opportunities for outdoor learning, including various trips and visits to places in the local area. These different activities help pupils to develop their understanding of risk taking, safety and their sense of community. In the sixth form, students work towards achieving qualifications that recognise the knowledge and skills they have learned. They are supported well when it comes to considering their next steps, which are always appropriately suited to their individual needs. As a result, pupils move on to appropriate destinations.

Leaders carefully plan for pupils' personal development. As a result, pupils learn about a range of important topics. Echoing the views of many parents and carers, one parent said, 'Portesbery has opened my daughter's eyes to the world around her.' Pupils learn about safety, consent, right from wrong and healthy relationships. They enjoy the opportunities they have to visit the local church, go on woodland walks and experience activities such as climbing, swimming and various sports. The 'sing and sign' choir is particularly popular. Here, pupils learn to follow instructions and important visual cues. They develop their confidence and musical abilities. Raising money for charity raises pupils' awareness of the importance of helping others.

During the inspection, one member of staff captured the views of many. They described the school as a 'magical place'. Staff feel well supported by the headteacher and other leaders. Their workload and well-being are prioritised. Despite this, leaders know that recruitment challenges are having a negative impact on some staff. Leaders are doing all they can to tackle the issue. A group of knowledgeable and skilled governors is providing effective support to help the school improve. They know the school's strengths and priority areas and work well together to support leaders, while holding them to account.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils and their families are well known by leaders. The designated safeguarding lead and a team of deputies are skilled professionals who understand the particular risks and vulnerabilities of their pupils. They have developed clear systems that are followed by staff. They ensure that concerns about pupils are followed up swiftly and effectively. Staff receive regular training that keeps their knowledge and skills up to date.

Inspectors identified some weaknesses in the school's record-keeping in relation to a very small number of recruitment checks and staff training. A couple of checks had been missed in these areas. Leaders addressed the issues during the inspection, but record-keeping processes need to be further strengthened.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not implemented as consistently across all areas of the school. This means that there are differences in how well the curriculum is implemented and therefore pupils' experiences. Senior leaders should ensure that curriculum leaders evaluate more effectively how well the curriculum is being implemented to ensure consistency for all pupils.
- There are some minor shortcomings in the school's record-keeping, relating to recruitment checks and staff training. As a result, there were some gaps identified in these areas during the inspection which meant that a couple of checks had been missed and some training had expired. While these were rectified during the inspection, leaders should develop more effective record-keeping processes to ensure that statutory duties are fulfilled at all times.

## 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 March 2013.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	125474
<b>Local authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256543
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	124
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	10
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Chris Hamilton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nathan Aspinall
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.portesbery.surrey.sch.uk">www.portesbery.surrey.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Portesbery School is an all-through special school that caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Pupils may also have additional sensory impairments, physical difficulties or challenging behaviour.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- A new chair of the governing body took up his post since the last inspection.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## 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.

- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, and teaching and support staff in the school. The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and communication, understanding the world and community, which includes mathematics and personal, social and emotional development. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, looked at samples of pupils' work, as well as photographic evidence of pupils' learning. The lead inspector also observed some pupils using phonics and a range of communication strategies.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and the free-text comments received during the inspection. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors held meetings with safeguarding leaders, governors, staff and pupils. They scrutinised the single central record and sampled various safeguarding records.
- Inspectors also took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and governing body meeting minutes.

### **Inspection team**

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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