

Inspection of a good school: Oakwood School

Balcombe Road, Horley, Surrey RH6 9AE

Inspection dates:

1 and 2 November 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils are happy at school and follow its expectations about behaviour and about how they treat each other and staff. Most pupils and their parents would recommend the school to others, and indeed it has grown significantly in recent years. Pupils largely feel well cared for and know who to go to if they have concerns. The school takes the pupils' safety and well-being seriously. Staff are well trained and vigilant.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement, and those who attend regularly achieve these expectations. However, the attendance of too many pupils is not good enough, which means they do not reach the goals that they are capable of. The school is aware of this and is starting work to tackle it. Pupils and staff know that reducing absence rates is a priority.

Lessons typically build on what pupils already know. Those who have gaps in knowledge due to absence find this harder, however. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and other disadvantaged pupils are more likely to miss school and, therefore, they achieve less. A sizeable minority of parents of pupils with SEND say communication with them is not effective in helping them support their children.

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

The curriculum is broad and includes a wide range of academic and vocational opportunities. The proportion of pupils taking subjects that constitute the English baccalaureate is slightly below average, but the school is working effectively to increase it.

Weaknesses in pupils' attendance mean that pupils do not benefit fully from the curriculum. Too many pupils miss school regularly. Often, these are pupils who require additional support in their learning. Fresh effort is being put into tackling this by the

school. Staff are identifying the causes and reorganising how they focus on the issue. There are some early signs of improvement, but more needs to be done.

In lessons, most pupils are compliant with their teachers' expectations and want to learn. High levels of suspensions last year have been reduced as a result of staff applying the school's behaviour policy more consistently. Where pupils need to be removed from lessons, there are effective strategies to keep them in school.

Teachers are knowledgeable in their subjects and passionate about them. Their explanations of new learning are effective and usually enable pupils to build on what they already know. Teachers and additional adults normally check pupils' understanding before moving on, with some being skilled at doing this. On occasion, this is not the case because teachers do not identify when pupils have not understood something fully. When this happens, pupils are less prepared for subsequent learning and they make less progress through the curriculum.

The school identifies pupils with SEND effectively and provides useful support in class or through additional sessions. The impact of this provision, however, is markedly reduced because of the overall rates of attendance for this group. Staff seek to address this in lessons, but these pupils are not catching up quickly enough on missed learning. Some parents of pupils with SEND speak warmly about the support provided, but a significant number do not feel well informed about how their children are getting on or how to support them. Where pupils are struggling to become fluent readers, the school offers a wide range of support, but this, too, is undermined by the low attendance of key groups of pupils.

A well-designed programme covering areas like relationships and sex education leads to effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils respect each other. There is a good range of clubs and out-of-school activities, including extra tuition for older pupils.

Governors, too, have taken a hard look at how they support and challenge and are closely focused on raising pupils' achievement. Staff are positive about the renewed focus, feel well supported and have manageable workloads. They work hard to support pupils, including managing behaviour effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Attendance is not good enough for too many pupils and undermines the impact of the education the school provides. This means that these pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The school needs to press ahead with the work it has started in analysing

the underlying causes of low attendance and changing how it approaches working with the families of the pupils concerned.

- Too many parents of pupils with SEND do not feel aware enough about what is provided by the school. They don't know enough about how well their children are getting on or about how they can help. While there are examples of good communication, the school should work more closely with these parents to identify what would be most helpful.
- Approaches to assessment are not consistent enough. At times, teachers do not know how much pupils have learned and, therefore, what pupils need to learn next. There is good practice in the school and this should be shared across all subjects and staff.

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 November 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	125273
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10296309
Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,570
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Emma Jukes
Headteacher	Jon Gladstone
Website	www.oakwood.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 May 2018 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher and the chair of the governing body both started in post at the start of this term.
- The school makes use of five registered alternative providers. All are colleges of further education inspected by Ofsted.
- The school has grown markedly in size in recent years.
- The school has a specialist centre for up to 10 pupils with communication needs.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. The lead inspector spoke with the chair of governors and one other governor, and with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and the creative arts. Each deep dive involved a discussion with subject staff, visits to lessons, discussions with pupils and an analysis of their work.
- Evidence was also collected through visits to other lessons, observations of pupils' behaviour around the school site and discussions with groups of pupils. Inspectors analysed questionnaires completed by parents, pupils and staff, and held discussions with senior leaders about the school's work and plans for development.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record of checks on adults; took account of the views of leaders, staff, parents and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Stephen Long, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Andy Platt	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Middleton	Ofsted Inspector

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