

Inspection of The Limes College

Sutton West Centre, Robin Hood Lane, Sutton, Surrey SM1 2SD

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Sali Goodrich. This school is part of the Alternative Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer who is also the executive principal, Emma Bradshaw, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sam Guy.

Ofsted has not previously inspected The Limes College as an academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils mostly attend this school for a short period of time. In that time, they build positive working relationships with staff, feel safe and are encouraged to feel valued. The school is ambitious for all pupils to achieve all that they can. Parents and carers are positive about their children's experience here.

Leaders prioritise improving pupils' behaviour and the impact of this work is reflected in the school's success in reintegration of pupils back to their mainstream schools or into new settings. Pupils are supported to understand their emotions and are taught strategies to help them regulate their behaviour for themselves.

From the moment pupils join the school, they are assigned support for their personal development through a tailored curriculum. Pupils are helped to understand what may hinder their learning and what action to take. This is further reinforced by a carefully planned and sequenced personal, social and health education curriculum. Pupils are taught about relationship issues in an age-appropriate way, including keeping personal information secure and alerted to grooming and manipulation. Pupils are encouraged to stay mentally and physically healthy, to keep themselves safe in a range of circumstances, including online, and made aware of the dangers to health of alcohol and drug misuse.

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

The school has put in place a programme of study that is designed to prepare pupils for their next stage of education or employment. Generally, pupils stay at the school for a short time and the curriculum enable pupils to progress back to mainstream or a specialist setting. For those pupils who stay at the school until the end of Year 11, the curriculum and range of subjects offered enable pupils to prepare for their future steps in training or education.

Typically, the school has thought about the key knowledge and skills pupils need to learn and remember in most subjects. Subject curriculums are well ordered so that pupils build on their prior knowledge. Sometimes, when the detail of what pupils need to learn and remember over time is not as clearly thought through and specified, teachers are less clear about what pupils need to be taught and pupils have gaps in their knowledge.

The school measures pupils' reading fluency as soon as they start at the school. In the primary phase, the school uses a systematic approach to teaching phonics. Primary-age pupils read books that closely match their phonics knowledge. In the secondary phase, the school puts some support in place for weaker readers. However, support with reading for secondary-age pupils who join the school with significant gaps in their reading knowledge is not as finely tuned to their individual needs to help them gain reading fluency and confidence and catch up quickly.

The school makes sure that the needs of all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified. Leaders regularly review pupils' personal action plans to ensure the right support is in place. When the need arises, leaders address any concerns swiftly and work together with outside professionals. Guidance is communicated effectively to staff so that adaptations can be made.

Staff are well trained in managing behaviour. When incidents of disruption occur, the well-being of pupils and staff is taken carefully into account. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and to understand the impact of their actions on the emotions and feelings of others. Pupils' behaviour is mostly calm and orderly inside and outside the classroom.

The school's enrichment programme gives pupils wider experiences outside of their subject lessons, including a range of outdoor learning such as horse riding and canoeing and opportunities to learn about and sail tall ships. Pupils raise money for charity and take part in art competitions. Leaders ensure that pupils receive careers information to support their next steps, including further study and the world of work.

The school robustly encourages regular attendance. Leaders ensure that pupils and parents understand the impact of poor attendance on pupils' learning and academic outcomes. The school puts effective support in place to improve pupils' attendance rates where needed.

Trustees and the governing body challenge leaders and work in partnership to assure themselves of the quality of the school's work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils in the secondary phase who join the school with significant weaknesses in their reading and gaps in their phonics knowledge are not helped to learn the phonics they need to read fluently and confidently. The school needs to refine the reading curriculum for secondary-age pupils who are weaker readers to enable them to build up phonics knowledge quickly and become fluent, confident readers.
- When curriculum thinking does not detail the subject content that pupils should learn or the order in which it should be taught, teachers are unclear about what they should teach resulting in gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school should ensure that curriculum thinking across all key stages specifies what pupils should learn, know and be able to do so that teachers know what to teach and pupils build up knowledge or skills securely.

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	145704
Local authority	Sutton
Inspection number	10290338
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	142
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sam Guy
CEO of the trust	Emma Bradshaw
Headteacher	Sali Goodrich
Website	www.thelimescollege.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 March 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Limes College converted to become an academy on 1 June 2019. It is part of the Alternative Learning Trust. A board of trustees is responsible for governance through a local governing body.
- The school makes use of two registered alternative providers, Just Learn and Road 2 Success.
- 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

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

- 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 carried out deep dives in reading, English, mathematics and creative arts. To do this, they met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record of pre-employment checks; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, teachers and the wider school team.
- Inspectors met with the chair of trustees and other trustees. Inspectors also met with the chair of the governing body and other governors.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Kieran Bird, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Teresa Neary

Ofsted Inspector

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