

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Walton Leigh School

Queen's Road, Hersham, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey KT12 5AB

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Inspection dates:

31 January and 1 February 2024

## **Outcome**

Walton Leigh School continues to be an outstanding school.

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

Pupils are extremely happy and safe in this inclusive school. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct. The care and support that pupils receive is first class. They are known as individuals. Pupils feel loved and respected. They learn a range of strategies to manage their feelings and behaviours positively. As a result, pupils' confidence and communication skills develop significantly over time.

Pupils flourish and achieve highly at Walton Leigh School. They develop their leadership skills through a rich range of experiences. Pupils delight in taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and relish the myriad of opportunities that promote their independence and resilience. Pupils enjoy working at cafés in the local area and work experience at a day care centre. They are excited about their recent skiing expedition. Pupils also value visiting the local library and the cinema. A major highlight is their outings to the supermarket to purchase ingredients for the tasty meals they learn to cook from scratch.

As well as being classroom ambassadors and monitors, pupils are delighted to be voted to the school council. At breaktimes, they enjoy catching up with their friends, relaxing in the sensory garden and riding bikes.

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

The school's motto, 'Making every day count', is threaded firmly into all aspects of daily routines. The school has crafted an extremely innovative and aspirational curriculum in all subjects. Pupils learn in purposefully designed curriculum pathways which take account primarily of their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and education, health and care (EHC plan) targets. Within each pathway, the school has set out precisely the ambitious knowledge and skills pupils should learn and the order in which it should be taught. Staff gather high levels of information about pupils before they join the school. They use this information extremely effectively to develop highly bespoke plans for each pupil. As a result, pupils are provided with a unique and personalised educational experience which, over time, transforms their lives. Pupils attend school regularly. Where

required, they are efficiently and expertly assisted to overcome any barriers that may affect their participation in school life. Staff go out of their way to help parents understand what their children are learning. As one parent said, 'Our children come in and leave school full of smiles.' As a result, pupils and students in sixth form are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Governors are highly ambitious for the whole-school community. They have developed meticulous systems that help them to monitor the impact of the school's work. Staff morale is excellent. They are highly motivated and feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being at all times.

There is a purposeful and harmonious atmosphere in classrooms and around school. Pupils are positively motivated and immerse themselves wholeheartedly in their work. Staff are exceptionally well trained to sensitively adapt learning to meet the sensory, emotional and physical needs of each pupil. They regularly check that pupils remember what they have learned. Adults expertly blend specialist support and therapies, both within lessons and on a one-to-one basis. These include occupational, speech and language, hydro and physiotherapies. Pupils achieve highly from their individual starting points.

Communication and reading form the bedrock of the curriculum. Through the highly specialised focus on communication, pupils learn to read symbols, pictures, and words. They learn exceptionally well to read and communicate their needs and understanding of the world. The school promotes a total communication approach, and all pupils are taught to sign and communicate effectively. Speech and language therapy further supports pupils' speech development. Staff are highly trained in skilfully teaching phonics sounds. Consequently, many pupils become fluent, prolific, and independent readers. They listen with joy to the stories that staff read and share.

The extent to which the curriculum supports pupils' personal development is impressive. Pupils speak and communicate passionately about equality and have a deep understanding of topics such as mutual respect, racism, rule of law and gender identity. They celebrate religious festivals and visit different places of worship. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of what makes a good friend and what makes a healthy relationship. A variety of trips and activities support this. Pupils go on visits to the theatre, art galleries and concerts. They enjoy a wide range of outdoor and indoor adventurous activities, regardless of physical ability. Pupils are also helped to consider their futures through an excellent careers programme. As a result, pupils and students in the sixth form leave school with clear and ambitious pathways for the future.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## Background

When we have judged outstanding we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in February 2014.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	125468
<b>Local authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	10296313
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 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>	86
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	22
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Elizabeth Wood-Dow
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mark Bryant (Executive headteacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.manor-mead.surrey.sch.uk">www.manor-mead.surrey.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with severe, profound and complex learning difficulties, many of whom have an autism and/or additional diagnoses. All the pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school is part of a federation with another special school in Surrey County Council, Manor Mead School. The federation is led by an executive headteacher.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, personal, social and health education and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, teaching and specialist therapist staff in the school. The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair. She also spoke on the telephone with an officer from Surrey County Council.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during visits to classrooms, during breaktimes and as pupils moved around the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents expressed in Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. Inspectors also considered the views of staff during meetings with them and through the staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; 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.
- 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.

### **Inspection team**

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Darren Aisthorpe

Ofsted Inspector

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