Inspection of an outstanding school: Highfield South Farnham School

Weydon Lane, Farnham, Surrey GU9 8QH

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 March 2024

Outcome

Highfield South Farnham School continues to be an outstanding school.

The headteacher of this school is Gregory West. This school is part of South Farnham Educational Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sir Andrew Carter, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Linda Ross.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has exceptionally high expectations for pupils' achievement, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This leads to all pupils achieving significantly well across the curriculum, including in end of key stage assessments. They are prepared remarkably well for their next phase of learning. Pupils speak with pride and enthusiasm about their learning. They develop into confident and articulate individuals.

Pupils are extremely proud to attend the school. There is a culture of ambition and high aspiration that permeates the school. Pupils thrive in the caring and nurturing school community. They say that this school is a safe place. Pupils are confident to speak with adults if they have any worries or concerns.

Pupils' behaviour is exceptional. Routines for excellent behaviour are embedded in the early years, and these high expectations remain throughout the school. Pupils are completely immersed in their learning. They are polite and courteous to staff and each other.

Parents are highly supportive of the school. One parent's comment was typical of many when they stated, 'I really feel Highfield put children at the centre of everything they do. We are very happy with the school.'

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

The school has designed and implemented a broad, rich and very ambitious curriculum. It deepens pupils' body of knowledge and understanding effectively. Concepts are

sequenced and taught in a logical order. Staff understand the precise knowledge that pupils should know and remember in every subject. This enables pupils to produce high-quality work across the curriculum consistently.

Teachers deliver lessons with notable consistency. They revisit pupils' previous learning, which helps pupils to make connections and learn better. Teachers demonstrate very secure subject knowledge. They make well-chosen choices in the way they deliver new learning, which is presented clearly. Staff support pupils' understanding of new knowledge by carefully selecting resources effectively, to deepen pupils' understanding. In the early years, the indoor and outdoor learning spaces are high quality. This supports children to develop their skills and knowledge across all areas of learning highly effectively.

Teachers check pupils' knowledge very thoroughly. They use this information to plan their next steps and address gaps in learning swiftly. This supports pupils to strengthen their knowledge, helping them to become highly skilled and confident. The school identifies and meets the additional needs of pupils precisely. Through careful and bespoke adaptations, the school makes sure that pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum as their peers. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve highly too.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. The teaching of phonics is clear, systematic and precisely matches pupils' needs. Staff are expert teachers of reading. They identify any pupils who are falling behind and provide the correct support promptly. Pupils practise their phonics by reading books that contain sounds that they know. They have a real love for reading books. Staff promote language development and the understanding of texts by engaging pupils in conversations, drama activities and performing.

Pupils enjoy the many leadership roles available to them, such as being eco-leaders, sports leaders and librarians. These responsibilities enable pupils to make a highly valued impact on the school. The school provides a wealth of well-considered opportunities. They help pupils to develop their talents and interests. These include sports and arts clubs and events.

Pupils experience a rich, well-rounded and broad education, going beyond learning in the classroom. They learn about different careers and professions from members of the community. Pupils are familiar with different faiths, cultures and beliefs and show great respect. The school takes part in numerous community events, including a carnival, charity fundraising and performing as part of a youth choir. The school ensures that there are no barriers to pupils acquiring wider experiences through what the school offers. The curriculum prepares pupils exceptionally well for life in modern Britain.

The support from the multi-academy trust has been influential in the school's continued success. Trustees and members of the local governing board have a precise oversight of the school. They carry out their responsibilities with diligence and fulfil their statutory duties. This enables those responsible for governance to hold the school fully to account for the quality of education the pupils receive. Staff appreciate the professional development opportunities they receive to refine and develop their expertise.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in January 2018.

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 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	141667
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10296410
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	476
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Linda Ross
CEO of the trust	Sir Andrew Carter
Headteacher	Gregory West
Website	www.highfield-sf.surrey.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of South Farnham Educational Trust
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school club.

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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff and pupils. The inspector also met with representatives of the board of trustees, the local governing body, the chief executive officer and representatives of the trust.

- The inspector spoke to a representative of the alternative provider.
- The inspector met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils during playtimes and in lessons.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also looked at samples of pupils' work across some other subjects.
- Responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents, including parents' free-text comments, were considered. The inspector also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. The pupil survey was available to the school, but there were no responses.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; evaluated safer recruitment practices; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; met with the designated safeguarding lead and a deputy safeguarding lead; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Darren Aisthorpe, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector

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