

Inspection of an outstanding school: Hoe Valley School

Egley Road, Woking, Surrey GU22 0NH

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 March 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding 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.

The headteacher of this school is Jane Davies. This school is part of a single academy trust named the Hoe Valley School. The school is overseen by a board of trustees, known as the board of governors, chaired by Liz Perkins.

What is it like to attend this school?

The great majority of pupils enjoy their time at school and attend regularly. The school has grown quickly since opening in 2015, moving from a temporary site to new purpose-built buildings in 2018. It now has pupils in all years, including in the sixth form.

Most pupils apply themselves well to learning and take advantage of the rich academic and extra-curricular opportunities. The school is ambitious for all pupils to do well. Its ethos of being 'a local school for all pupils' sees it encourage them to successfully study a wide range of subjects. In very many cases, and especially for most-able pupils, its ambition is achieved, with many pupils being set up well for the future. However, there are some pupils, notably disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who are not achieving as much as they could.

Pupils are kept safe at the school through the staff team's vigilance and tenacity in supporting them. They say they feel well looked after. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is orderly and respectful on the part of most pupils, though a few find it hard to adhere to the school's high expectations. There is little bullying in the school and pupils are confident that any which occurs is tackled effectively by staff.

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

The school offers a wide curriculum with particular breadth in modern foreign languages, as reflected in its International School status. The proportion of pupils studying the GCSE subjects which make up the English Baccalaureate is above that nationally. Within subjects, the school ensures that pupils encounter new knowledge in a logical order, enabling most to learn securely and achieve well at GCSE. The sixth-form curriculum includes a wide subject range, selected by the school to meet the needs of students well. Students are enjoying the new provision and achieving well overall on their courses.

Teachers have strong subject expertise. They are often innovative in explaining new learning, many making effective use of technology such as Chromebooks and online resources. There is much effective practice in ensuring that pupils have fully learned new material. This includes in-class questioning and assessment systems to check progress over time. Subject-expert teaching assistants often support pupils well. However, sometimes staff do not make full use of information about vulnerable pupils, including those with SEND, when planning teaching. As a result, strategies are less effective and these pupils learn less securely. This is not always identified by staff for these pupils, or where pupils and students are less able, with some uncertainties left unaddressed. A small but noteworthy number of parents and carers of pupils with SEND singled this out. The school effectively identifies pupils who need help to read well, providing support to ensure that they catch up.

In lessons, most pupils want to learn. They follow expected routines and respond to teachers' instructions. The school's approach to encouraging appropriate behaviour works well for most, and sixth-form students set a good example. The school supports pupils' wider personal development skilfully. As a result, the pupil community is a largely respectful one, with pupils of all backgrounds welcomed. Pupils typically learn to make the

right choices and develop their social skills for later life. The school reviews carefully how well things work and makes adjustments to the personal, social, health and economic education programme where needed. There is a strong programme of careers guidance and work experience. This was improved further this year by the addition of a careers fair. This was held on the second day of the inspection, with pupils and sixth-form students very excited to learn about career and study options.

A small number of pupils struggle to behave appropriately, and some do not attend well. The school has worked hard on this, bringing some improvements in attendance and fewer suspensions for misconduct. However, too many pupils from less advantaged backgrounds or who have SEND still regularly miss school or are suspended. More is required to tackle this so that these pupils achieve well.

In addition to the school's academic programme, a wide range of clubs, visits and visitors support strongly the pupils' wider cultural and social experiences. The school is true to its vision statement in financially backing disadvantaged pupils so they can benefit too.

Staff form a cohesive body and their morale is high. They are well trained in key areas such as keeping pupils safe and say they have a manageable workload. Governors work hard to support and challenge the school so that most, though not all, of its goals are achieved.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not always make use of all the information available about pupils with additional needs and/or SEND when planning activities. This means some of these pupils do not learn securely. The school should ensure that staff make more use of what is known about pupils when planning their learning.
- Teachers' checking of whether pupils have learned new material is occasionally ineffective, resulting in pupils' misconceptions or lack of clarity going uncorrected. The school should ensure that all staff have the knowledge and confidence to do this consistently before moving on with learning.
- The school's work to ensure that all pupils attend well has not reduced the high absence levels for some pupils. They are missing out on valuable learning and the school should carry out further work with pupils and their families where there are concerns.
- Efforts to reduce pupil suspensions arising from misconduct have yet to improve sufficiently the behaviour of a small group. This affects the learning of these pupils and the school should redouble its efforts to improve these pupils' behaviour.

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 June 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 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	142009
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10296413
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	802
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	22
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Liz Perkins
Headteacher	Jane Davies
Website	www.hoevalleyschool.org
Date of previous inspection	12 June 2018 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, when the school only had Years 7 to 9, the school has gained pupils in all year groups. It has moved into purpose-built accommodation.
- 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.
- The school uses three registered alternative providers and two unregistered providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of the 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, other members of the senior leadership team and members of the governing body and trustees, including the chair of trustees. They met with a range of staff and pupil groups, observed the work of the school at break and lunchtimes, visited lessons, checked samples of pupils' work and took into account the responses to online surveys completed by parents, pupils and staff. They also looked at documents such as records of governors' meetings, school development plans and attendance records.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science and computer science. In each subject, inspectors met the subject leader and other teachers of the subject, pupils studying the subject with their work, and visited a range of lessons.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, inspectors took account of the views of staff, parents and pupils, reviewed the single central record of checks on adults and considered how well the school had established an open and positive culture within which to put pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Stephen Long, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jane Cartwright

Ofsted Inspector

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