

Inspection of a good school: Therfield School

Dilston Road, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 7NZ

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 May 2024

Outcome

Therfield School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is James Malley. This school is part of South East Surrey Schools Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, David Blow, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Timothy Poole. David Blow is also the executive headteacher, who is responsible for this school and two others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils benefit from a well-planned and ambitious curriculum. The school has high expectations and staff take care to revisit and extend pupils' understanding of key content. This results in confident pupils, who remember previous learning well and are ready for the challenge of new learning. Some pupils who are disadvantaged do not achieve as consistently strongly as other pupils.

The school is caring and nurturing. It develops pupils' understanding of the school values of excellence, leadership and opportunity. Staff build positive, warm and respectful relationships with pupils. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe. They understand the behaviour expectations, and staff celebrate positive behaviour. Pupils are confident that staff will address any concerns effectively and swiftly. Pupils behave well in and out of lessons and are kind to and respectful of each other. They enjoy school and trust teachers to prepare them well for the next steps in their future.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities. The wide offer of visits, clubs, and close links to experts across the local and business communities provides a 'window on the world' for pupils. Pupils also relish the range of leadership opportunities, including student council and pupil voice projects.

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

The school has designed an interesting and well-sequenced curriculum. Staff are aspirational for all pupils and ensure there is a wide selection of courses available,

including for sixth-form students. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are swiftly identified. Staff provide appropriate support so that they generally achieve well.

Staff have secure subject knowledge. They design carefully sequenced activities to help pupils focus on the most important content. Staff routinely recap key learning to help pupils to remember more over time. They are guided by staff to sharply focus on the most important knowledge and skills in each sequence of lessons. Staff carefully check pupils' understanding and provide precise feedback so that pupils know how to improve. Pupils' work usually demonstrates secure achievement over time. They are proud of their work and organise their written work coherently, including those in the sixth form. In 2023, pupils who were disadvantaged did not achieve as well as other pupils. The school is taking action to address this. However, their evaluation of the impact of this work lacks sufficient precision.

The school prioritises reading for all pupils. The phonics programme helps those who are most behind on arrival in Year 7 to catch up with their reading. The school checks pupils' reading progress routinely and ensures everyone reads to develop their fluency and confidence.

Pupils generally attend well, and attendance is continuing to improve. The school works to understand the reasons for pupils' absence and works well with individual families to address these. The school is developing its oversight of the attendance of different groups, including those who are disadvantaged. Pupils behave well in lessons supported by the school's clear routines and high expectations. The school is calm and orderly. Pupils move quickly and quietly between lessons. Relationships are positive and based on mutual respect between pupils and staff. Lessons are not disrupted by poor behaviour, and staff are quick to support pupils to make good decisions.

The wider curriculum promotes pupils' personal development well. The personal, social, health and economic curriculum is used to carefully prepare pupils for their future lives. They learn how to recognise healthy relationships and how to stay safe, both in the community and online. Staff do not shy away from tackling challenging issues, such as misogyny and world conflicts. This helps pupils to develop respect for others. The school uses clubs, trips and visitors to broaden pupils' horizons. It is developing its oversight to ensure that pupils who are disadvantaged benefit strongly from these opportunities. Careers education is well developed. Thoughtful events such as work experience and support for individuals ensure that pupils are well informed about future choices.

The school works positively with staff and parents. Staff appreciate how the school invests in training to improve their subject knowledge. Parents value how the school balances a focus on academic and other aspects of pupils' development. One parent reflected the views of many when they commented, 'They put pupils' well-being and academic achievement at the forefront of everything that they do.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's work to improve provision for disadvantaged pupils lacks sufficient precision. This means that they are not swift to evaluate and then adjust actions or resources where there is most need. The school should develop a sharper oversight of the achievement, attendance and opportunities for disadvantaged pupils.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2019.

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	143902
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10322030
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	1,043
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	108
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair of trust	Timothy Poole
Headteacher	James Malley
Website	www.therfield.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the South East Surrey Schools Education Trust.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for up to 20 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils who attend the 'CoIN' centre have a communication and interaction need. This includes pupils with autism and development language disorders.
- 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 had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in this evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in English, mathematics, French and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a selection of lessons, talked with subject teachers, spoke to pupils and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, teachers, students and pupils.
- 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.
- Inspectors reviewed policies provided by the school. They studied curriculum documentation, behaviour logs, attendance records and destination information. The lead inspector met with trustees and members of the governing board.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey of parents' views and other written comments. They reviewed the responses to the online surveys completed by staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Charles Joseph, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Helen Middleton

Ofsted Inspector

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