

Inspection of The Abbey School

Menin Way, Farnham, Surrey GU9 8DY

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 June 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is David Jackson. This school is part of the Weydon Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), John Winter and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ralph Johnson.

What is it like to attend this school?

This exceptional school strikes a balance of providing nurturing care and academic ambition to enable all pupils to achieve their very best. From the moment pupils join, expert staff identify the specific help that pupils need to prepare them to lead fulfilling lives. Pupils enjoy a wide and varied curriculum that raises their aspirations and sets them on the right path. Pupils are enthusiastic in lessons, showing impressive levels of dedication to their work. They rise consistently to the high expectations that staff have of them.

Warm, positive relationships between staff and pupils build on a secure foundation of mutual respect and care. Daily routines such as lining up and walking calmly around the school are consistent and managed very well by staff. The use of visual aids and symbols help pupils to understand expectations of them. Lessons are settled and orderly, meaning pupils can learn well.

Pupils show respect and kindness towards one and other. They are immensely proud of the strong friendships that they make during their time in school. During social times, pupils enjoy an extensive range of exciting clubs such as basketball and film club. These clubs are fully accessible so that all pupils, including those with physical disabilities, participate.

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

Staff hold the highest expectations of what pupils will achieve during their time in school. The school's mission statement of 'together we can' underpins the ambitious and rewarding curriculum. The learning provided promotes independence and fosters a keenness to know and find out more. The curriculum is matched to pupils' aspirations for the future. Course options such as horticulture, childcare and media build towards pupils achieving a range of suitable qualifications. This is enhanced by weekly college placements, a range of work experiences and informative careers guidance. Pupils leave school very well prepared and ready to continue successfully to post-16 destinations.

When pupils join the school, staff gain as much information as they can from previous placements, alongside speaking to parents and carers. Staff work with clinical and therapy professionals to ensure pupils receive effective support. Outcomes from pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans are carefully broken down into smaller personalised targets. Pupils carry individual 'target cards', empowering them to take ownership of their own learning and behaviour. Pupils attend school very well because they do not want to miss out on learning.

The school prioritises helping pupils to communicate effectively. This starts with learning to read and write well. In every lesson, staff identify the specific vocabulary that pupils need to understand. Using symbols and visual aids, pupils make secure connections between words and their meanings. Staff skilfully develop pupils' ability to write with meaning and purpose. Consequently, pupils eloquently debate their

views and ideas. Pupils read often, taking it in turns to act out the roles in the engaging stories they read. Those at the earlier stages of learning to read receive expert help. Staff have a shared 'common language' they use when helping pupils to read. This ensures support is consistent, and consequently pupils read very well with competence and enjoyment.

The school is exemplary in its approach to make sure disadvantaged pupils have access to the same enrichment opportunities as their peers. Staff work with families to ensure these pupils have the tools and resources they need to thrive. If needed, staff help parents establish routines in the home. Parents are appreciative of this home-school partnership.

Meticulous plans for pupils' holistic development compliment the highly effective academic curriculum. Offsite trips to learn to ride a bike or swim are used to further practice important life skills. Residential trips are planned in partnership with parents so that pupils are confident to stay away from home. Trips to London theatres and visits from local authors and poets inspire and enrich pupils' development. Parents and pupils speak of the exceptional quality of these opportunities.

Staff know exactly what is expected of them and receive extensive training and support. They are enormously proud of the school and its pupils. Trustees and governors understand their roles and execute them exceptionally well. They maintain a clear strategic vision which translates into the school providing an outstanding educational provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	146255
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10296448
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ralph Johnson
CEO of trust	John Winter
Headteacher	David Jackson
Website	www.abbey.surrey.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 December 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Abbey School provides specialist support for pupils with autism and moderate learning difficulties. All pupils attending the school have an EHC plan.
- The school make use of one provider of alternative education.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information 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.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector also met with the representatives from the board of trustees, including the chair of trustees. They also met with representatives of the local governing board and the CEO.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: English including early reading, mathematics, computing and life skills. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including the free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- 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 and scrutinised a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' plans for improving the school, minutes from governors meetings, records of attendance, and behaviour incidents, including the use of suspension and exclusion.

Inspection team

Michelle Payne, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jason Philipsz

Ofsted Inspector

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