

Inspection of an outstanding school: Gosden House School

Horsham Road, Bramley, Guildford, Surrey GU5 0AH

Inspection dates:

19–20 November 2019

Outcome

Gosden House School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very happy at this school because it is extremely friendly and welcoming. They benefit from the highly skilled support of the staff and are exceptionally well prepared for their future. The pupils have a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils who left last year moved on to college or another specialist provision.

The opportunities and experience the school offers to promote pupils' personal development are impressive. The school is set in fantastic grounds that provide extensive outside learning opportunities, such as gardening and animal care, as well as being the location for the annual 'GOSFEST'. This is a festival showcasing the school's talents in dance, music and drama.

Pupils in the school behave well. The staff really know and understand the pupils' needs. They know how to support pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour and they do this calmly and effectively. Pupils said there was no bullying, but if there was, they knew the adults would deal with it.

One parent said, 'The school has changed my daughter's life completely. The school takes in children just the way they are. They then give them the confidence to feel good about themselves again and build up their self-esteem.'

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

The headteacher and her team are exceptionally ambitious for all the pupils in the school. The quality of education is outstanding. Leaders have consulted with parents and carers, pupils and staff, to really think about what skills the 'Gosden graduates' need to be successful when they leave the school. These essential skills are called the 'toolkit' and form the basis of an exciting, broad and balanced curriculum.

Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is core to the school's curriculum and elements run through the whole timetable and all subjects. The PSHE curriculum is a real strength. Primary teachers follow a well-organised and sequenced programme when

teaching this subject. The flow of the curriculum in primary has been carefully thought out to link with the secondary, longer-established, PSHE curriculum. Pupils build their knowledge securely, step by step. Secondary pupils reflect thoughtfully that the curriculum helps them to develop the social, emotional and independent skills they need to be successful citizens in the future. Staff review pupils' reflections to help identify any areas where pupils may need support in order to succeed. The PSHE curriculum has been instrumental in providing pupils with all the tools they need to be well-prepared graduates.

Reading is a huge focus in the school. Leaders recognise that if pupils read confidently then pupils' attainment across the curriculum will benefit immensely. Teaching supports pupils to improve their reading skills, as well as to develop a love for reading. Leaders ensure that pupils learn the functional skills in English and mathematics they will need in their future. This supports pupils to apply their knowledge in real situations, for example reading signs in the community, or calculating change when they sell things they have made.

In art, pupils get the opportunity to develop their skills by completing a wide variety of exciting and challenging projects. Pupils have benefited significantly from working with visiting artists. The school has also utilised the talents of their highly skilled staff, for example teaching pupils how to expertly use graphics to make book covers or to design and make the amazing sculptures that are displayed in the grounds. The art curriculum adds exceptionally well to the pupils' quality of education.

The extremely wide and varied curriculum enriches the pupils and provides them bountiful opportunities to experience an impressive range of trips and activities. This includes musical presentations, chances to perform with other schools in local theatres and visits to places of interest, such as wildlife parks. The whole curriculum engages pupils and, as a result, pupils behave well and join in their lessons enthusiastically.

Leaders ensure that clear systems are followed to support pupils' very good attendance. Staff and leaders know the pupils well and support pupils whose health and medical needs affect their attendance. Leaders work proactively with parents and outside agencies to ensure that pupils attend school regularly.

The early years curriculum, together with the enthusiasm and passion of staff, inspires the children. The curriculum in early years has been well thought out and provides children with endless opportunities to explore, investigate and develop the skills to be confident learners. The staff know the children exceptionally well. Staff use this knowledge well to ensure that children's learning builds over time. Staff provide activities which address any gaps identified in children's developing knowledge, skills and understanding. As a result, children become thoroughly happy and enthusiastic learners. Furthermore, staff are hugely ambitious for all the children and encourage them to be adventurous in all aspects of learning and development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Inspectors found that safeguarding was central to the work of the school and is a real strength. Safeguarding training is thorough, ensuring that all staff know how to raise concerns about a pupil. Leaders work with external professionals effectively to keep pupils safe. Leaders are tenacious; they persistently challenge other professionals to ensure that the pupils and their families get the help they need. All parents, and staff spoken to on the inspection, felt the pupils were safe in the school. The pupils said they have been taught to be safe online and in the community. Pupils said they know they can talk to staff if they are worried about anything.

Background

When we have judged a special 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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged Gosden House School to be outstanding on 8–9 December 2010.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	125452
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10111396
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Pat Adams
Headteacher	Cindy O'Sullivan
Website	www.gosden-house.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 February 2016

Information about this school

- Gosden House School is a special school that caters for pupils from the age of 4 to 16 years.
- At the last inspection, the school included boys and girls in the primary provision, and girls only in the secondary phase. The school's intake is now mixed in key stages 1, 2 and 3, and will soon be completely mixed.
- The school provides for pupils who have moderate or severe learning difficulties. Some pupils have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder. A few pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher was appointed in April 2016.

Information about this inspection

- We held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body, and spoke on the telephone to a representative of the local authority. Meetings were also held with senior and curriculum leaders.

- We reviewed safeguarding procedures in place at the school, including the single central record and child protection and safeguarding policies. We met with the designated leaders of safeguarding.
- We took account of 17 responses recorded on Ofsted’s Parent View survey, including 11 associated free-text comments. We also spoke to some parents at the start of the school day.
- The views of staff were gathered through meetings with groups of staff and by taking account of the 35 responses to Ofsted’s online staff questionnaire.
- We spoke to pupils in lessons and met with the school council. The views of pupils were also considered from the 30 responses to Ofsted’s online pupil questionnaire.
- We looked at a range of documentation, including: the school’s self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; information relating to the attendance and behaviour of pupils; the curriculum; and minutes from the governors’ meetings.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, creative arts and PSHE. We met with subject leaders, teachers and groups of pupils. We visited lessons and looked at pupils’ work.

Inspection team

Susan Conway, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Simon Yates

Ofsted Inspector

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