

The Hermitage School

Oakwood Road, St John's, Woking, Surrey GU21 8UU

Inspection dates

11–12 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not yet ensured that teaching is consistently good enough to improve the outcomes for all groups of pupils. Expectations about what pupils should achieve are not always high enough.
- Assessments of pupils' progress, and other information collected by leaders, are not analysed sufficiently well to identify potential underachievement. As a result, leaders' own evaluations of the school's effectiveness are too positive.
- Leaders' plans for improvement often lack rigour and clear direction. Leaders have not evaluated the impact of their many new initiatives on pupils' progress.
- Pupil premium funding has not been used effectively to help disadvantaged pupils to catch up.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not do as well as other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Variation in the quality of teaching, including in the Orchard Centre and during interventions, means that too many pupils are not yet making good progress.
- Governors are not always provided with the right information to allow them to challenge leaders about the progress that different groups of pupils make.
- Pupils' progress in writing is slowed because of their weaker skills in spelling and the incorrect use of punctuation and grammar.
- Some pupils have significant gaps in their basic calculation skills in mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- Safeguarding is effective. Staff receive extensive training to ensure that they are able to keep pupils safe from harm.
- Pupils' personal development and emotional welfare are supported and promoted well by a dedicated team of staff. As a result, pupils feel safe and behave well at school.
- Governors have the capacity and skills to challenge school leaders to improve.
- Year-group leaders and subject leaders know their pupils and subjects well. They are energetic and enthusiastic about making the improvements necessary to help pupils make better progress.
- Attendance is above average, demonstrating that pupils enjoy coming to school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - evaluations of the quality of teaching take account of the progress pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make from their starting points
 - improvement plans set challenging targets about what pupils should achieve as the result of leaders' actions
 - new initiatives are rooted in evidence about what is effective, and are evaluated against the impact they have on raising attainment and accelerating progress
 - provision funded by the pupil premium is used effectively to help disadvantaged pupils catch up with other pupils nationally
 - interventions for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and other pupils, are reviewed to be certain that they help pupils make more progress than they would in class
 - governors are given all of the information they require to challenge leaders to make the rapid improvements necessary.
- Improve teaching, including in the Orchard Centre, so that it is at least good by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information effectively to plan work that enables pupils to make rapid progress from their starting points
 - checking pupils' progress within lessons so that they are moved on to more challenging tasks more quickly or given more support when needed
 - adding further urgency and rigour to the current work to improve pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - quickly identifying gaps in pupils' mathematical skills and knowledge, and planning activities to address them
 - staff learning from the best teaching within the school and wider afield.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the school opened as an academy in 2014, leaders have not done enough to improve the quality of teaching or the outcomes for different groups of pupils.
- Leaders collect lots of information about pupils' achievements but do not scrutinise it well enough. Not enough detailed analysis is made of the performance of significant groups of pupils such as those who are disadvantaged or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders do not use assessment information, their observations of teaching, or the views of pupils and parents well enough to help them plan the improvements needed. Current improvement plans for aspects of the school's work are not ambitious enough. They do not include sufficiently challenging targets for improving pupils' achievement.
- In an attempt to raise standards, leaders have introduced a number of projects that aim to promote pupils' well-being and resilience. However, these initiatives have not been evaluated well enough to understand if they help pupils to make good progress in their learning.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching do not make a strong enough link between what they observe in classrooms and the progress pupils make over time. As a result, the leaders' evaluation of the overall quality of teaching is too generous.
- Pupil premium funding has not been used effectively to raise standards. Leaders have now recognised this and have sought support to make improvements. Disadvantaged pupils are no longer falling further behind their peers. However, the action plan for improvement is not yet focused sharply enough on diminishing the differences in performance between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally.
- There are currently interim leadership arrangements for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, both in the Orchard Centre and mainstream classes. The leaders responsible for these pupils are not yet ensuring that teaching fully meets their needs, or that they make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders responsible for English and mathematics have recognised last year's underperformance in national tests for grammar, punctuation, spelling and mathematics, and have started to plan appropriate actions to address this. They enthuse others and have instigated some purposeful direction for future improvement. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work.
- Year-group leaders have a strong work ethic, want to improve and are keen to support their colleagues. Many of them have been trained well by more senior leaders within the school and are now ready to rise to the challenge of having an impact beyond their own classroom. They are eager for further guidance and focus so that their work leads to improvements for all groups of pupils.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Effective links are made between subjects to form interesting topics. Pupils are required to apply their writing skills in many different subject areas although this focus on writing can sometimes detract from the development of skills in subjects such as history and geography.
- The school makes particularly effective use of trips and visitors to enrich learning and develop pupils' cultural understanding. Pupils have a developing appreciation of life in modern Britain and the values they will need to be successful. Pupils show a level of respect to people from different backgrounds and religions.
- Recently, school leaders have been held more accountable and challenged by colleagues from within the Swan Trust.

Governance

- Although many governors are relatively new to role, they have a wide range of skills that enable them to challenge school leaders effectively. Governors regularly evaluate their own effectiveness and have made recent efforts to improve their profile in the school with both staff and parents.
- Members of the governing body make regular visits to the school and have recently highlighted that pupil premium funding is not used as well as it should be. Governors have challenged school leaders about this and have sought additional support from the Swan Trust.
- Governors do not always receive as much accurate information as they should about the progress made by pupils and especially those who are disadvantaged. As a result, they have not held leaders fully to account for the previous underperformance of pupils.
- The governing body ensures that teachers' pay progression is based on the information they receive about their performance, and that the sport premium is spent on improving opportunities and participation in competitive sport.
- Governors are very aware of the improvements the school now needs to make, and have the capacity to hold leaders to account for their actions. Governors know where to access support to help them to challenge leaders to make further improvements to the school's effectiveness.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Parents, pupils and staff are confident that the school is a safe place. Pupils in the school are known well as individuals by the headteacher and her staff. As a result, any changes in behaviour are quickly spotted and acted on where necessary.
- The deputy headteacher, in her role as designated safeguarding lead, provides staff with regular and up-to-date training. The weekly 'hot topics' briefing ensures that staff are always aware of the risks faced by their pupils. In recent times, the focus has been on online safety and protecting pupils from radicalisation and extremism.

- Checks on the recruitment of staff are rigorous. The school's procedures for working with other agencies to protect the most vulnerable pupils follow agreed principles and detailed records are kept as required.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because the impact it has on pupils' achievement across the school is inconsistent. Where teaching is less effective, it sometimes leads to off-task behaviour because the level of challenge for pupils is too low.
- New assessment systems are still being embedded and, as a result, some parents have not received as much information about their child's progress as they would like. Teachers' assessments are now accurate and help them to plan relevant learning activities for pupils. However, more precision is still needed in determining next steps in learning for pupils so that pupils can make accelerated progress.
- Teachers know the disadvantaged pupils in their class well. However, they do not make sure that class teaching and interventions outside the classroom work well together to help pupils to make good progress.
- Teaching is often less effective in the intervention groups that are intended to help pupils who are falling behind to catch up with their peers. Some pupils frequently attend these groups instead of their class English and mathematics lessons to develop their number and phonics skills. Where these interventions are not planned carefully enough, pupils are at risk of falling further behind their peers.
- Planning and teaching in the Orchard Centre sometimes do not meet the pupils' individual needs sufficiently well. Systems to plan activities based on previous assessment and achievements are not well embedded. Pupils who attend the Orchard Centre each morning are welcomed into mainstream classes each afternoon. They are well supported by teaching assistants who help them to join in, for example when learning French.
- The most successful learning takes place where teachers closely monitor the class and intervene to add extra support or challenge where needed. These teachers have the capability to share their expertise with colleagues to improve teaching throughout the school.
- Pupils are positive about their learning and how teachers help them to improve in lessons. At the end of one Year 3 mathematics lesson, inspectors observed pupils so enthused by a challenging problem that they wanted to take it home to test their parents.
- Pupils across the school told inspectors that they appreciate the feedback they receive from teachers that is in line with the school's policy.
- The cross-curricular approach to teaching literacy is used very successfully to engage pupils and develop their vocabulary and ability to write in a number of different styles. However, precision in spelling and the accurate use of punctuation and grammar are sometimes overlooked both by pupils and teachers.

- Mathematics lessons offer pupils many opportunities to problem solve and reason. This engages pupils who on the whole enjoy a challenge. Pupils and teachers use mathematical language accurately. Teachers have rightly identified that some pupils have some gaps in their understanding of basic calculation and arithmetic, and are planning activities to overcome this.
- The most able pupils are challenged well, especially in Year 6. For example, they demonstrate advanced comprehension skills in reading where they can describe the mood in an extract from a Dickens novel and can read 'between the lines' in a chapter from Harry Potter. In mathematics, they solve complex problems to identify missing angles using a number of geometric rules.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are known well as individuals and there is strong pastoral support for pupils, especially those who have additional social or emotional needs.
- There are a range of opportunities for pupils to take on additional responsibilities. For example, they can become playground friends, join the eco-committee or be elected to the school council.
- The effective personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum helps pupils to understand and enjoy positive relationships with their friends and family. The physical education curriculum, taught by sports coaches funded through the sports premium, promotes healthy lifestyles well.
- New initiatives to enhance personal development are building momentum and are starting to improve pupils' confidence and resilience. However, they are not yet having a clear impact on improving academic standards.
- Although some parents and pupils expressed concerns about bullying, inspectors found that any incidents were dealt with appropriately by children themselves, teachers or other adults, and therefore rarely needed to be addressed by senior leaders. However, it is clear that these leaders also take appropriate action when it is necessary.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are friendly and very positive about school. They open doors for visitors and say 'hello'. They understand the school rules and values and do their best to follow them. Instances of poor behaviour are rare.
- Pupils treat each other equally and respect the differences that exist between them. Different groups get along together including at playtimes and lunchtimes when they play collaboratively.
- Attendance is above average and improving. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is also improving from a lower starting point.

- Behaviour in class and by pupils who attend the Orchard Centre is good. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, have positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Where teaching is not challenging, pupils sometimes become bored and this can lead to occasional low-level disruption. Mixed expectations from teachers mean that there is wide variation in the quality of pupils' presentation in their books.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, attainment at the end of key stage 2 in national tests for mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling was below average. In mathematics, these pupils had made significantly less progress than expected during their time at The Hermitage School.
- Attainment in the reading test and writing assessments at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 was broadly average.
- Disadvantaged pupils who left the school in the summer of 2016 had made less progress than other pupils nationally and their peers in the school. This was because pupil premium funding was not focused tightly enough on raising the attainment of these pupils.
- Evidence in books and school assessment information shows that the majority of current pupils are now making the progress that is expected in reading and mathematics. However, this progress slows in lessons when tasks are not clear or well thought out.
- Current disadvantaged pupils are now making progress that is similar to their peers in the school so they are no longer falling further behind. However, differences in attainment with other pupils nationally are not yet diminishing.
- Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to improve on the school's outcomes from last year. The majority of these pupils are working at the required standard, with the most able pupils in Year 6 making the strongest progress. However, the most able disadvantaged pupils are not always challenged to meet their potential. For example, they are under-represented in the top mathematics set.
- Pupils in mainstream classes who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress towards their targets. This progress is most positive in writing and in the older classes. Outcomes for pupils who attend the Orchard Centre are more variable.
- Leaders recognise that progress in spelling, punctuation and grammar is not yet good enough. Even some of the most able pupils are not consistently following basic punctuation conventions. Nonetheless, pupils are improving in their fluency in writing and sometimes make ambitious vocabulary choices.
- Leaders are only just starting to track pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. Therefore, pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are not developing as quickly as they could.

School details

Unique reference number	140594
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10024480

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	344
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jo MacDonald
Headteacher	Kerry Knight
Telephone number	01483 472 047
Website	www.hermitage.surrey.sch.uk
Email address	info@hermitage.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened as an academy on 1 February 2014. When the school converted to academy status it joined the Swan Trust, an umbrella trust of five schools that support and collaborate with each other, as equal partners.
- The school incorporates the Orchard Centre, a specialist provision for 18 pupils who have moderate learning difficulties. Pupils attend the centre each morning and join mainstream classes each afternoon.
- The school is larger than the average junior school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is smaller than found nationally.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Approximately one in 10 pupils speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is greater than that found in primary schools nationally.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about key stage 2 outcomes and the planned use of pupil premium funding.
- In 2015, the school met the government floor standards that set out the minimum expectations for primary schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in each class and in the Orchard Centre. They also made a number of shorter visits to classes and intervention groups. The majority of the observations were carried out with the headteacher or other school leaders.
- The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body, including the chair. He also met with an independent education consultant employed by the school.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of school documentation, including documents related to safeguarding, attendance, the pupil premium, school improvement and governance.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other school leaders.
- To gain their views of the school, inspectors spoke informally with pupils in lessons and around the school, went on a tour of the school with some pupils and met two groups of pupils more formally. Inspectors considered 101 responses to the online pupil questionnaire. Inspectors also heard some pupils in Year 3 and Year 6 read.
- In addition to speaking to a number of parents at the start of the inspection, inspectors considered 46 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, including 24 free text comments.
- Inspectors considered 16 responses to the confidential staff survey.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Linda Jacobs	Ofsted Inspector
Charlotte Wilson	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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