

Inspection of a good school: Esher Church of England High School

More Lane, Esher, Surrey KT10 8AP

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 March 2022

Outcome

Esher Church of England High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They show kindness and respect to one another. The school has a strong sense of community. This is supported by the strong Christian ethos and the values of wisdom, hope, community and dignity.

Conduct around the school is good natured and positive. Pupils are welcoming and considerate of visitors. Lessons are calm and orderly. Reasonable and effective action is taken where pupils fall short of the school's high expectations. This includes whenever bullying of any kind is reported.

Pupils' views of the curriculum are positive. Older pupils say the content builds well on what has gone before. They can identify links with other subjects. Reading for pleasure is a huge school focus. Pupils enjoy their weekly reading sessions. They value the opportunities to discuss the books and consider issues raised.

Extra-curricular and enrichment provision are highly valued and much appreciated. The school offers an extensive sporting programme as well as subject clubs and involvement in the school production. Close links with Zambia provide opportunities for outreach work alongside charitable events closer to home.

Pastoral support for students is strong. Pupils' mental health and well-being is a priority for the school. Student feedback is regularly sought and acted on.

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

Leaders have planned and created a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils. It is founded on the national curriculum with enhancements to extend, personalise and localise content. The proportion of pupils entered for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is rising as a result of the school's improved emphasis on languages.

The curriculum builds sequentially on that taught in the primary phase. It supplements any gaps arising from pupils' differing experiences. Curriculum links post-16 are well established to support academic and vocational pathways. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects. Assessment is regularly undertaken, but the quality is variable. Verbal feedback is supportive and appreciated.

Careers education is a strength of the curriculum. It is offered in all years and includes a range of experiences to prepare pupils for further education and employment. External visits and visitors promote apprenticeships. Careers talks and university visits inform pupil choices including those pupils who are disadvantaged.

Personal development is covered across personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), religious education, assemblies and tutorial time. Content is not sufficiently sequenced to ensure that the provision is coherent. Relationship and sex education content is not always age appropriate and sensitively sequenced. The school acknowledges that further work is necessary to ensure provision matches that of other subject areas.

Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well known and effectively supported. Teachers have a range of strategies including seating plans and additional assistance. The school had previously identified low-attaining and disadvantaged boys as an area for attention. This has resulted in a greater focus on vocational subjects, such as construction, to better engage them in the curriculum. In addition, all tutors have taken on mentoring to support these pupils, including with their organisation skills.

In spite of the turbulence caused by the pandemic, the school continues to work hard on improving attendance and behaviour. School attendance is now higher than the national average and behaviour incidents are falling. Data is collated for all groups, but a deeper analysis is needed to better identify areas to continue to target in the future.

Leaders provide strong and purposeful leadership founded on Christian values. Subject leaders have created and sequenced their curriculum well. Staff feel supported in their workload and their well-being. Professional development opportunities offer bespoke pathways for all staff. Self-evaluation and improvement planning are expressed well. However, evidence to support judgements is more descriptive than evaluative.

Trustees and governors have a good understanding of the school. They ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties and maintains a strong culture of safeguarding. They confidently identify strengths of provision and know the areas for improvement. Trustees and governors' knowledge and involvement in the school have ensured that they are able to act as a critical friend and ask challenging questions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders give safeguarding the highest priority. Staff training is comprehensively planned. Staff are clear about the dangers that pupils may face in or outside of school. They are quick to identify pupils who may need support.

The safeguarding policy is up to date and covers all areas including harmful sexual behaviour and extremism. The single central record is compliant, and all necessary checks are made when appointing adults to work in the school.

Pupils know how to stay safe, including online. They also learn how to form positive and healthy relationships. There is a clear focus on supporting pupils' well-being and mental health. The safety of pupils placed with alternative providers is closely monitored.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that the PSHCE curriculum is planned with sufficient precision. It is unclear how the content builds cumulatively to support pupils' knowledge and understanding over time. Leaders should ensure that the PSHCE curriculum is organised sequentially and covers the content identified in the school's 'Relationships and Sex Education Policy'. Links with other subject areas, such as religious education, and the tutorial and assembly programme need to be carefully considered so that pupils' overall experience is sequential and coherent over time.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school to be good in September 2013.

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.

If you are the school and 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	140650
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10211546
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Debra Mason
Headteacher	Andy King
Website	www.esherhigh.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Esher Church of England High School is a larger than average 11 to 16 mixed secondary school. The school is part of the Enlighten Learning Trust.
- Five pupils attend courses off site at two registered education providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, technology and history. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked to teachers and pupils.

- Inspectors held meetings with the senior leaders and staff as well as a range of pupils. They considered the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding and supporting pupils' health, safety, welfare and well-being.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum documents, school policies and behaviour records. The lead inspector met with members of the trust and governing board.
- Inspectors considered 149 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, along with 106 additional responses from parents and carers. They reviewed the survey responses from 61 staff and 235 pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
James Rouse	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Baker	Ofsted Inspector

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