

Inspection of a good school: Red Gates School

Farnborough Avenue, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 8HD

Inspection dates:

28 February and 1 March 2023

Outcome

Red Gates School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a kind and caring school where pupils flourish. They arrive at school each day smiling and keen to find out what they will be learning. They develop respectful relationships with staff and form positive friendships with each other.

Pupils are treated as individuals, but they are also very much part of a social group. This helps pupils to feel safe and secure at school.

Right from the early years, children learn to listen and develop language skills. Step by step, they grow in confidence and find effective ways to communicate their ideas and express their feelings. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and describe progress as 'gradual but mind-blowing over time'.

Clubs, visits and performances contribute to pupils' success. Pupils relish being part of the choir and the rock music group. Sometimes, it takes years for pupils to actively participate, but when they do, it is cause for whole-school celebration.

Staff have created a positive learning environment that helps pupils to stay calm and engage in their learning. Sometimes pupils need extra support from adults to manage their emotions. Staff and parents agree that bullying does not happen, but if it did, leaders would act swiftly to address it.

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

Pupils' needs are at the core of the school's curriculum. Pupils make remarkable progress. Teachers skilfully break down knowledge into small steps. They support pupils to repeat learning until it is secure. Teachers routinely use multi-sensory resources to help pupils

focus their attention on learning and make it memorable. Pupils enjoy exploring their carefully prepared environment. Staff show endless patience in supporting them.

Reading is prioritised. Staff teach phonics to pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. The books these pupils read match the sounds they know. This helps them to grow in confidence in their reading. This enables them to develop their skills and knowledge in all subjects. Pupils not yet at the stage of learning phonics formally are taught to understand that text, sounds, and symbols all have meaning. Staff read books to pupils to encourage them to enjoy stories. The parents that inspectors spoke to had previously thought their children would never read, and now they bring home books to share every week.

Leaders' comprehensive approach to communication and language is at the core of their work. Staff use strategies such as signing and symbols consistently well. At snack time, for example, pupils learn to make a choice by exchanging pictures for foods and drinks. Some pupils learn to ask with a short sentence. Children in the early years are encouraged to start communicating by identifying and matching objects, numbers and letters. Adults teach children to be part of a group so they can benefit from lesson input. Learning gathers momentum as pupils develop secure communication strategies. Parents say that their children are transformed as a result. Throughout the school, pupils make strong progress in developing the skills they need to express themselves well.

Teachers know each pupil's needs exceptionally well. They make skilful use of ongoing checks on what pupils can do, routinely adapting teaching to meet pupils' precise learning needs. For example, pupils use practical equipment for mathematical tasks, but teachers know the exact moment when pupils are able to reason and apply a calculation method.

The curriculum is complemented well by an impressive range of lunchtime clubs. Pupils excel during these activities because they can choose from motivating activities that work towards their ambitions and aspirations. Off-site lessons provide further opportunities for pupils to overcome significant personal barriers. These big and small successes are rejoiced in during weekly celebration assemblies.

Staff use positive approaches to manage pupils' behaviour. Disruption in lessons is rare. Sometimes pupils need help to regulate their behaviour. This is usually when pupils first join the school and are getting used to the new environment.

Staff say that leaders are visible. Their door is always open, and they listen and act if staff have concerns about workload. Staff feel appreciated and are proud of the high quality of training that the school offers. The governing body is knowledgeable about its role and is dedicated to the school's continuing improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding that permeates the school. All staff are vigilant and know how to recognise the signs that a pupil might be at risk. They report concerns

as soon as they notice them. There are thorough checks on all staff working at the school.

Many pupils at the school are developing their communication skills. Staff understand that this may make them more vulnerable. Leaders work closely with other agencies to help identify support for families or children at risk of harm.

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 school to be good in October 2017.

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](#)' 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	101855
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10255525
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Anne-Marie Brown
Headteacher	Melissa Hendry
Website	redgates.croydon.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a special school for pupils between the ages of two and 11 years.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school caters for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties. Many have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other leaders, including curriculum and pastoral leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, art, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about

their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.

- Inspectors met with members of staff individually and in groups and spoke to pupils at various points during the inspection. Inspectors took account of responses to pupil and staff surveys, as well as Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at records relating to behaviour, bullying, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with the designated safeguarding lead.

Inspection team

Francis Gonzalez, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Nell Nicholson

Ofsted Inspector

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