

Highfield South Farnham School

Weydon Lane, Farnham, Surrey GU9 8QH

Inspection dates

10–11 January 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders are unwavering in their determination to do their absolute best for all the pupils in the school. Their work during the three years since the school opened has established high expectations and high standards of learning and care.
- Staff work tirelessly to raise pupils' aspirations and help them to become successful learners. Staff are held closely to account by leaders for the difference their work makes. Effective training, supported by the trust, ensures that staff are successful in their roles.
- Highly effective and accurate assessment enables teachers to plan learning that meets pupils' emerging needs promptly and successfully. Adults act swiftly to address pupils' misconceptions and gaps in their learning, so that pupils do not fall behind.
- Pupils achieve very well at the school. In every year group, the proportion of pupils reaching at least the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is well above the national average. More attained the higher standard last year than was seen nationally, although there is scope for even more to achieve these levels.
- Disadvantaged pupils are very successful. They achieve in line with other pupils nationally. Those who were previously persistently absent now attend school regularly.
- The curriculum builds pupils' knowledge and skills very well across a suitably wide range of subjects. Pupils' experiences are notably enriched by the wide and increasing range of additional opportunities provided via clubs, trips and visitors. This instils an enthusiasm for learning.
- High standards of care and welfare are real strengths of the school, and are valued greatly by pupils and their parents and carers. Vulnerable pupils and their families are supported well. Consequently, pupils flourish.
- Pupils typically come to school regularly. Leaders' successful and tenacious work has brought about improvements in attendance for those pupils who, in the past, have not come to school as much as they should.
- Standards of behaviour in the school are typically good or better. A small proportion of pupils find it difficult to manage their own behaviour as well as they should. Staff work skilfully to support these pupils, who respond well to them.
- Children in the early years are prepared exceptionally well for the formal learning that follows. Staff work highly effectively together to provide rich learning experiences that enable children to thrive.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Establish consistently impeccable standards of behaviour across the school, by helping those pupils who do not currently manage their conduct independently to develop this aspect of their learning.
- Make sure that pupils' rapid progress is sustained, so that increasing proportions achieve higher standards than those expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher leads his school with visible passion and uncompromising ambition. He is determined for the school to contribute positively to the local community through providing the very best experience for pupils. His pragmatic approach unites staff in being absolutely committed to enabling all pupils to be safe, happy and successful.
- Staff across the school are highly effective in their roles. Their shared high expectations and aspirations drive their determination to prepare pupils successfully for their next steps in learning. Consequently, pupils are supported extremely well and make excellent progress, academically and holistically, throughout their time at the school.
- Leaders demonstrate a very clear focus on sustaining and developing the quality of teaching across the school. They make effective use of expertise from the trust and across other local schools to support their staff in developing their teaching and leadership skills. As a result, pupils experience and benefit from useful opportunities to achieve extremely well.
- Staff value greatly the training they receive, which helps them to develop as successful practitioners. Leaders encourage and expect staff to commit to their ongoing professional development, regardless of prior skill or experience, in a school that feels that its learning journey never ends. Access to useful and structured support from colleagues in school and across the trust links to the needs of individual staff as well as the developing needs of the school. The focus on working together is evident through feedback and minutes from regular staff meetings, where there is a constant focus on understanding how pupils learn, and on making the quality of teaching even better.
- Leaders at all levels hold staff closely to account for the difference their work is making to pupils' achievements. Leaders and governors use an appropriate range of activities to make careful checks on standards in the school and identify next steps for school improvement. Their work identifies development priorities accurately, both for the school as a whole and for individual members of staff. Improvement targets are clearly identified and explored through helpful conversations, although written records of these discussions are not always as sharp as they could be.
- Leaders use additional funding creatively and efficiently to support those pupils it is directed towards, as well as others who may benefit. The difference their work makes to pupils who attract the pupil premium is highly evident in these pupils' rapidly improving attendance and strong academic outcomes. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported similarly well.
- The curriculum is structured carefully to ensure that pupils receive a balanced and enriching experience that prepares them extremely well for secondary school. Teachers plan learning that builds pupils' wider skills and understanding across a broad range of subject areas, while reinforcing and developing their literacy and numeracy. Pupils take part in activities that are meaningful to them, such as writing with quills when learning about the Tudors. This brings learning to life and helps pupils to transfer their learning successfully from subject to subject.

- Leaders use additional sports premium funding very well to enhance pupils' experiences in physical education lessons and to encourage healthy habits. Sustained investment in equipment and training for all staff leads to consistently effective teaching and learning across a wider range of sports than was accessible in the past. Pupils relish opportunities to participate increasingly in competitive sporting events, where they enjoy sharing the pride they have in their school and demonstrate their resilience when they are less successful.
- Pupils benefit from a rich and increasingly diverse range of opportunities to learn beyond the taught curriculum. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted throughout. Pupils have the opportunity to suggest particular clubs and activities that interest them, such as watercolour, yoga, and business enterprise clubs, which staff endeavour to put into place. Pupils say that they particularly enjoy the trips they participate in as part of their learning, such as visiting the Natural History Museum.
- Pupils are encouraged strongly to take up their role as local and wider global citizens. Leaders utilise every opportunity to expose pupils to experiences that teach them about the world around them. Pupils understand British values, such as democracy and tolerance, and demonstrate them in their actions, for example in their interactions with each other around the school and in the school council's work to represent the views of the pupil body as a whole.
- Parents reflect very positively on their experiences of the school. They say that standards have risen notably since the trust began working with the predecessor school. They recognise the dedication, skills and caring approach of all the adults in school, and how their children benefit from them. Their confidence in the school is demonstrated by a notable number of parents who have recently moved their children to Highfield from other schools, in order to better meet their needs.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is capable and highly committed to raising standards for the benefit of pupils in the school. It works actively and closely with school leaders, to hold them effectively to account for the difference their work is making to pupils' experiences.
- Governors bring a useful range of skills and experience to their roles. They have clearly defined areas of focus, which enable them to make best use of their individual areas of expertise. They provide appropriate challenge to leaders about standards in the school, visiting often to test out what leaders tell them.
- Governors understand and carry out their safeguarding duties effectively. They check regularly to make sure systems and processes are fit for purpose. A governor meets regularly with the deputy headteacher to maintain a clear overview of relevant safeguarding issues, sharing pertinent and appropriate feedback with the wider governing body to ensure that governors are suitably informed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Keeping pupils safe is the primary concern of all staff. They know individual pupils and their families very well, and understand important factors that may impact on their welfare. The home–school link worker provides a highly effective connection between pupils, families and staff, which enables everyone to work together successfully for the benefit of the pupils.
- Leaders carry out suitably rigorous checks on any adult coming into school. They keep careful records and ensure that appropriate training is given, supported by useful policies that are readily accessible. Consequently, staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and carry them out diligently. This promotes the strong culture of safeguarding that is evident across the school.
- Where an individual pupil’s circumstances make them vulnerable, effective systems ensure that this information is shared promptly with those who need to act on it. Leaders work closely with a range of experts from beyond the school in order to provide appropriate support to pupils and their families. Their actions are well thought out and pupils feel safe and well cared for as a result.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Pupils learn very well over time because leaders’ carefully thought out approach to planning and assessment across the school enables teachers to meet pupils’ emerging needs promptly and successfully.
- In lessons, pupils enjoy their learning and participate with enthusiasm. Older pupils typically demonstrate particularly positive attitudes, working diligently to apply their knowledge and develop their skills. Teachers are skilful at refocusing those pupils who occasionally lose sight of the purpose of the learning activities they are engaging in.
- Teachers adopt a school-wide approach to planning that considers carefully how to build and deepen learning over time. For example, in mathematics basic functions are secured at age-appropriate levels then learning is deepened through pupils applying what they know in increasingly abstract ways to solve problems and use their reasoning skills. This helps pupils to be challenged appropriately to achieve high standards and make good progress.
- Teachers know pupils very well, and check their understanding regularly and frequently. They identify accurately and quickly whether pupils have secured learning at the highest possible level. This enables additional teaching and support to be deployed promptly and precisely where it is needed. Pupils are keen to engage with this extra support, and recognise how it helps them to learn. Consequently, pupils acquire solid foundations for their learning, which they build on confidently and effectively over time.
- Pupils acquire phonics skills well because of the high-quality teaching they experience, starting in the early years. Pupils look forward to these sessions, understand the routines that help them learn, and really enjoy participating. Rapid learning in early years develops seamlessly into focused groups in Year 1 that cater for pupils’ different needs, and are delivered effectively by staff using their secure subject knowledge. As a result, pupils’ phonics skills are well embedded by the end of key stage 1.

- Pupils benefit from regular opportunities to improve their previous work. For example, in English pupils routinely revisit their writing to embed the technical skills they are developing. This results in pupils making good progress and producing high-quality work over time.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils have highly positive working relationships with staff who, they recognise, have their best interests at heart. Staff work sensitively with pupils whose needs are more complex than others, helping them to engage positively in the life of the school. This contributes effectively to the community ethos that has developed in the school.
- Pupils typically feel very safe and well cared for. They understand who will help them with any worries or challenges that they may have. Staff clearly care very deeply about pupils, while not compromising their high expectations. Pupils recognise their school as a place where people are kind.
- Pupils welcome opportunities to widen their horizons about the world around them, for example by meeting visitors from the local community. They flourish as a result of a wide and increasing range of opportunities to contribute to and participate in local events such as the Farnham Carnival. This builds their confidence and helps them to become effective citizens.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves healthy and safe in an age-appropriate way. Their understanding of the difference between friendship worries and bullying is sophisticated for their age. They report that bullying happens infrequently, and that staff act promptly to address any issues that arise.
- A small number of pupils who attend the 'Search' nurture group are extremely well provided for. Leaders work with experts from beyond the school to ensure that this provision appropriately meets the needs of pupils who attend it. Close and rigorous liaison between staff at Highfield and 'Search' ensures that pupils are kept safe and are able to reintegrate smoothly back into full-time attendance at school, where this most appropriately meets their needs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils typically behave well during lessons and when moving around the school site. Most demonstrate very good conduct, including at playtime and during assembly. Adults offer timely and effective reminders to the small proportion who find it more challenging to manage their own behaviour, and these pupils respond very well.
- Leaders' effective work has led to notable improvements for some pupils who did not attend school often enough in the past, including some who are disadvantaged and/or have SEN and/or disabilities. Pupils' attendance is now in line with national figures and continues to improve. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently

absent has declined markedly because of leaders' determined support of and appropriate challenge of families. Where attendance remains too low, leaders are sensitive to the context but retain their high expectations for pupils to come to school regularly.

- A very small proportion of pupils, staff and parents expressed concern that some pupils do not behave as well as they should during learning time. They describe behaviour on the playground as sometimes being overly boisterous. While these pupils respond readily to adults' reminders about their conduct, some do not routinely demonstrate sufficient self-discipline to manage their own behaviour consistently well.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- When pupils join the school in the early years, their prior learning and development is broadly typical for their age. Published performance measures show that, over a sustained period, outcomes in phonics and at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 are well above national figures. This highlights the excellent progress that pupils make throughout their time at the school.
- The progress made over the course of key stage 2 by pupils in Year 6 in 2017 was in the top 10% nationally. The proportion who achieved at least the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was well above the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving a higher standard of learning was similarly high, being double the national average in reading and mathematics, and in line with national figures for writing.
- Pupils attain similarly well across key stage 1. Although the proportion of pupils achieving the phonics screening check standard by the end of Year 1 in 2017 declined slightly from the previous year, it is consistently above the national average, and almost all pupils achieve the required standard by the end of Year 2. Equally, above-average percentages of pupils finished key stage 1 working at or above the expected standard for their age.
- Leaders' performance information shows pupils currently in the school to be achieving just as well as they have in the recent past. In every year group, much higher proportions of pupils are achieving at least the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics than is seen nationally. This is reflected in the high quality of pupils' written work, in particular, which shows pupils writing creatively and with high levels of sophistication and technical accuracy. Leaders check carefully that teachers' judgements about pupils' attainment are accurate, by moderating regularly with other schools across the trust and in the local area.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve very well across subjects. They typically attain at least in line with other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics, and are catching up with other pupils in school. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make similarly strong progress. This demonstrates how effectively leaders use additional funding to support their needs.
- The knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils secure by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6 prepare them very well for their future learning. Leaders describe proudly the positive feedback from their neighbouring secondary school about

how pupils are increasingly well equipped to access the key stage 3 curriculum. This is because of their secure reading, writing, mathematical and communication skills, as well as their study habits.

- Leaders recognise that, as standards rise lower down the school, it will be important to maintain pupils' current strong progress throughout their time at the school. As a result, the proportion of pupils who achieve above the standard expected for their age would be expected to increase further. Although the percentage of pupils currently deemed to be working at the higher standard is lower than was the case by the end of the last academic year, this reflects being only part way through the academic year. Pupils' work demonstrates secure and rapid progress since the start of the year, but leaders will need to maintain a careful focus to ensure that rates of progress are sustained.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children in the early years provision are extremely well prepared for key stage 1 learning. This is because of their consistently high-quality experience during both Nursery and the Reception Year.
- Leaders across the early years provision are knowledgeable and capable. They work together to ensure a consistent approach across Nursery and the Reception Year. Leaders check regularly to make sure standards remain high. They identify accurate priorities for ongoing development, supported practically by investment from the trust. They ensure that legal requirements are fulfilled and that arrangements to keep children safe are equally as effective as in the rest of the school.
- On arrival at the school, staff assess children's prior learning rigorously and accurately. This enables staff to identify the children's range of needs very effectively. Staff work well together, and the thoughtful and well-planned learning opportunities they put in place stimulate children to make rapid progress.
- Children engage incredibly well with their learning. They show themselves to be happy, confident and highly cooperative with each other. This was evident during a visit to the Nursery, where children waited patiently for their turn in the soft play area. Two children were seen discussing a toy they each wanted to play with, and kindly agreeing to share it without the need for an adult to guide them.
- Adults' interactions with children are consistently effective in developing learning. Adults ask thoughtful questions that encourage the children to explore the world around them and deepen their understanding. Their actions do not constrain the children's thinking. Adults step back when appropriate to do so, to let the children think for themselves. This helps children to make rapid progress across all the areas of early years learning.
- The learning environment is bright, safe and highly stimulating. Inside and outside spaces are attractive, well-resourced and purposeful. This encourages children to develop their independence through self-directed play, as well as engaging in adult-led activities. For example, during the inspection children in the Reception Year were seen riding bikes and scooters, then putting on protective equipment and using the 'car wash' to clean them afterwards.

- Children benefit from useful opportunities to engage in more formal preparation for key stage 1. Phonics teaching is highly effective, and leads to children having a securely age-appropriate understanding of letters and sounds. This supports them during guided writing opportunities, where they sound out how to spell words such as 'swim'.
- Children achieve well by the end of the early years. The proportion who achieve a good level of development is increasing year on year, and is well above the national average. Where variation in achievement has been seen in the past, such as between boys and girls, leaders have taken appropriate action to address and help those who are behind to catch up.

School details

Unique reference number	141667
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10040904

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	265
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr John Reyersbach
Headteacher	Mr Gregory West
Telephone number	01252 721079
Website	www.highfield-sf.surrey.sch.uk
Email address	info.highfield@sfet.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Highfield South Farnham School is a sponsor-led academy. It opened in February 2015, when the predecessor school closed. It includes a Nursery which accommodates children aged three and above in a separate building on the school site. It is currently a one-form entry school, although there are two classes in Years 1 and 6.
- The school is part of the South Farnham Educational Trust (SFET), which is a multi-academy trust. Leaders work closely with colleagues across the trust to support ongoing development and school improvement. The trust delegates general responsibility for the running of the school to a local governing body.
- Most pupils are of White British origin. A lower-than-average proportion are believed to speak English as an additional language. Approximately a third of pupils have been eligible for free school meals at some point over the past six years.
- More than a quarter of pupils receive support for a special educational need, which is double the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special

educational needs and/or an education, health and care plan is broadly in line with the national average, although a number of other pupils currently have applications which are pending.

- A very small number of pupils receive additional support by attending the 'Search' nurture group at St Paul's CofE Infant School on a part-time basis.
- The school meets the current government floor standards for what pupils are expected to achieve by the end of key stage 2.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes at least once to observe learning, look at books and talk to pupils about their work. Some of these visits were carried out with the trust's chief executive officer. Inspectors also worked with the school's English and mathematics leaders to scrutinise a sample of work from pupils in Years 1 and 5.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, trust representatives, groups of school leaders, staff, pupils and governors to discuss a range of issues. They also spoke informally to parents at the start of the inspection, and to pupils at playtime.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of relevant documentation provided by the school and available on the school website. This included curriculum planning; teaching and learning records; overviews of pupils' performance, attendance and behaviour; and a number of pertinent policies.
- In gathering a wide range of views about the school's effectiveness, inspectors took into account survey responses from 24 pupils and 20 members of staff. They also considered 58 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, including 58 free-text responses, and two letters and an email received from parents.

Inspection team

Kathryn Moles, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Timothy Rome	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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