

Inspection of a good school: St Piers School

St Pier's Lane, Lingfield, Surrey RH7 6PW

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

Outcome

St Piers School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy, settled and very well cared for at St Piers School. School life is busy and fulfilling, with lots to do and learn each day. Pupils who met with inspectors talked sensibly and enthusiastically about the fun that they have and about some of their favourite subjects.

Staff develop a strong rapport with their pupils. They expect pupils to work hard and behave well, and most usually do. Adults are experts in supporting pupils' emotional needs, so that pupils feel secure, valued and respected. Pupils feel comfortable talking with adults and say that there is always someone to speak to if they are anxious or worried. They talk maturely about the part staff play in helping them to understand their feelings and to manage their own behaviour. One pupil described how adults help her to feel calm and relaxed. Leaders respond quickly if any concerns about bullying arise.

Staff take every opportunity to teach pupils skills which will enable them to lead as independent a life as possible in the future. 'The Link' is set up to replicate a home environment, providing valuable opportunities for pupils to learn life skills, such as how to use a washing machine and how to prepare a snack.

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

Leaders have steered the school through a period of rapid change very effectively. They have established a shared sense of purpose in the school, and a renewed energy and determination in the drive for improvement. Staff speak of notable developments in the last six months which have lifted staff morale and strengthened teamwork. Parents have noticed the difference too, with one commenting, 'Things are now changing for the better.' The recently appointed executive principal is building on this success very well. Her vision, ambition and determination to secure the best education for pupils are clear. The executive principal is working closely with leaders and staff to ensure that recent gains are maintained while also looking ahead to future goals.

Pupils learn well in a wide range of subjects. The older pupils study qualification courses in key stage 4 in subjects such as English, mathematics and computing. Leaders have updated the curriculum in English and mathematics in recent months. This has improved the quality of pupils' learning, although developments are not yet securely established across the school. Students in the sixth form follow a range of accredited qualifications, such as functional skills. The Link plays a key part in preparing them with skills to support them in their future lives. Students go on to a variety of destinations, including some who attend St Piers College.

The phonics programme was introduced a year ago and provides pupils with a secure grounding in early reading skills. Staff adapt the reading curriculum well to support pupils' individual needs. They use a wide range of resources, such as youth newspapers, computer tablets and games, as well as books, to engage pupils in reading. Pupils are taught to notice text all around them, such as fire exit signs and road signs, and this helps to prepare them for life in the future.

Pupils have a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff provide skilful and caring support, assessing pupils' learning carefully and continuously, and making any changes needed as they work alongside pupils. This works well. Pupils enjoy learning. They usually behave very well in lessons, so that classrooms are calm and purposeful. Adults' endless patience and good humour mean that pupils feel comfortable and secure. Sometimes, pupils' needs cause them understandable anxiety and frustration, which can lead to challenging behaviour. Such incidents are usually resolved quickly, although sometimes staff lack the confidence to step in early enough to stop a pupil's behaviour becoming more problematic.

Leaders aim to equip all pupils with the knowledge and skills needed to live as independent a life as possible. Pupils develop secure strategies for communicating their thoughts and wishes. Their needs vary widely, and staff work hard to find a communication strategy which works best for each pupil. This ensures that all pupils learn how to express choices and preferences, and adults respect their views.

The school's curriculum provides a wealth of opportunities to help to prepare pupils for future life. Pupils are ambitious for the future, speaking to inspectors about their plans to be a mechanic, an artist, a karate teacher or head of school. There are plenty of activities to spark and nurture pupils' interests, such as football, music and yoga. They thoroughly enjoy the school's excellent facilities, which include a swimming pool, a gym and a set of customised go-karts. During the inspection, pupils thoroughly enjoyed running the school's tuck-shop, taking turns to serve customers and to use the till.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is highly knowledgeable about safeguarding matters. She uses a wide range of training and resources to ensure that staff have an up-to-date understanding of policies and procedures. Staff are confident about what to look for, recording and reporting any concerns diligently, no matter how minor they may seem.

This means that the DSL can spot any worrying trends or patterns over time. She and her colleagues work closely with agencies, acting quickly, where necessary, to ensure a pupil's well-being. All parents who completed Ofsted's survey feel that pupils are safe and happy in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Recent improvements in the English and mathematics curriculum are not yet fully established. As a result, there are variations in how well pupils learn in these subjects. Leaders should continue work to ensure that improvements in English and mathematics are securely embedded.
- Some staff have a better understanding of behaviour management strategies than others. Variations in behaviour management mean that pupils sometimes behave less well than they should. Leaders should improve this aspect of the school's work.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 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.

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	125453
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10256547
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	62
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tamsin Jones
Principal	Simone Hopkins (Executive Principal)
Website	www.stpiers.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Piers School is operated by the National Centre for Young People with Epilepsy (NCYPE), which trades as Young Epilepsy.
- St Piers School is a special school for pupils between the ages of five and 19. All pupils have an education, health and care plan to support their SEND. Pupils who attend have a range of conditions, including epilepsy, autism, moderate and severe learning difficulties and other complex neurological conditions.
- The school shares the site with St Piers College and with three residential homes, all of which are inspected separately. Eighteen pupils on the school's roll live in the residential home.
- The Neville Childhood Epilepsy Centre, which is managed and run by the NHS and has links with Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, is also located on the site.
- The previous principal left the school in July 2022. An interim executive principal and interim leadership team were in post during the autumn term 2022. The governing

body commissioned an external educational consultant to work with the interim leadership team during this time. The current executive principal was appointed in January 2023.

- The school has made changes to its provision since the previous inspection, moving from a 52-week provision to a term-time only provision.
- The school does not use 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.
- Inspectors met with the executive principal, the interim executive principal, the interim head of school and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of staff at different times during the inspection. They also considered the views expressed by staff in Ofsted's survey.
- The lead inspector met with two governors, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, physical development and personal development. Deep dives included visits to lessons, a review of pupils' work, and discussions with leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector also looked at a range of pupils' mathematics work.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons, during the lunch-break and at other times of the school day.
- Parents' views were gathered through a range of sources, including Ofsted's survey and informal discussions at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors assessed the school's safeguarding culture throughout the inspection. They checked the single central record and reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documents and records.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sue Bzikot

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023