

# Inspection of Unsted Park School

Munstead Heath Road, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1UW

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Inspection dates: 7 to 9 November 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Sixth-form provision

**Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Unsted Park School provides pupils with a caring environment where they feel safe and secure. Staff here understand that many pupils join the school following disruption to their education. They work hard to help pupils readjust to a school setting. Teachers and teaching assistants take time to get to know each pupil well and form strong relationships with them. This helps to build the sense that pupils and staff all belong to one community.

Although pupils generally achieve well here, their learning across subjects and key stages is inconsistent. Sometimes, the teaching that pupils receive is not adapted to meet their needs or build on what they already know. The curriculum for key stage 2 is underdeveloped, which means that pupils in the primary phase are not learning as well as those in secondary.

Parents value the high levels of care and support that the school provides. Many parents describe how their children have flourished since starting at the school. One told us, 'We have finally found a setting where our child can learn to be himself and where his mental health is viewed as the most important aspect.'

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

The quality of education pupils receive at this school is variable. In the majority of subjects, particularly in the secondary phase, there is a coherent and well-planned curriculum which sets out what pupils should learn and in what order. However, this is not the case in all areas and the curriculum for key stage 2 is notably weaker than elsewhere. Although there are plans in place which show what pupils should learn in Years 3 to 6, these need further development. Here, teachers have not been provided with the required guidance and training to deliver this curriculum effectively and consistently. Most pupils at this school can read at an age-appropriate level. However, the school is still in the process of introducing a systematic approach to support those pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read.

Pupils' learning is assessed regularly in all year groups and this enables teachers to work out how pupils are progressing over time. However, assessment is used less successfully within lessons to identify what pupils know and where they need extra help. Equally, there is variability in how well learning is adapted to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Some aspects of this are highly successful, for example in relation to pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. However, there is less shared understanding about how to design, deliver and adapt the curriculum for pupils with autism. This is done more successfully in the sixth form, where the curriculum is planned and delivered consistently well.

Pupils behave well in lessons. Teachers create positive and nurturing environments where pupils feel safe to contribute ideas and engage with their learning. Adults in

the school recognise that their pupils sometimes need additional flexibility or movement breaks and there are systems in school to ensure that this is managed well.

The majority of pupils attend school regularly. The school identifies those pupils who need support to improve their attendance. They work positively and proactively with these pupils and their families to remove any barriers to coming into school. Although some of this work has been developed recently, there are early signs that it is having a positive impact.

Personal development is a strength of the school. Many pupils make long journeys in the morning to attend. Considerable thought has been given to providing them with a wide range of morning activities to help them regulate and prepare for the school day. For example, pupils enjoy activities such as table tennis and cooking. These sessions are timetabled so that all benefit. Healthy lifestyles are strongly encouraged, including opportunities for pupils to exercise, often utilising the school pool or gym. Pupils learn about nutrition and are encouraged to eat a healthy diet. They are taught about relationships in an age-appropriate way. Leaders have ensured that the school complies with the relevant standards by publishing an appropriate policy on relationships and sex and health education as well as consulting parents on the way this content is delivered.

Staff ensure that pupils are equipped to make decisions about their next steps with confidence. The majority go on either to university or a vocational college course based on their strengths and aspirations. There is a well-planned careers programme which begins in key stage 2 and continues through the school. Particularly in key stage 5, students benefit from applying their knowledge during work experience placements facilitated by the school.

Through the curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, pupils learn to appreciate the experiences, views and beliefs of others. They learn about how to stay safe, including when online. Learning about PSHE is also woven through the curriculum in other subjects, which helps to broaden and reinforce pupils' learning.

Leaders and the proprietor body have an accurate and realistic understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have ensured that the school continues to meet the requirements of the independent school standards, including those in relation to the curriculum. They also fulfil their statutory requirements, for example in relation to equalities and the publication of a suitable accessibility plan. However, the school has not addressed previously identified weaknesses in the quality of education. The proprietor has supported the school in identifying areas for improvement but has not acted quickly enough to make sure that they are addressed effectively. Although there is some provision for staff to access subject-specific training, there has not been a coordinated approach by leaders to make sure that this is targeted and effective.

The school works closely with parents, the majority of whom are happy with the education and care their children receive. Any complaints are handled appropriately using the published policy. Staff appreciate leaders' consideration of their workload and well-being, including in the creation of new policies and procedures.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Except in the sixth form, learning is often not informed by assessment of pupils' previous knowledge and information about SEND. Teachers do not consistently identify learning gaps or misconceptions, which allows these to go unaddressed. The school needs to ensure that all staff have the knowledge and confidence to improve practice in this area so that what is taught in lessons is more precisely matched to pupils' needs.
- The key stage 2 curriculum is not sufficiently coherent and there is not a systematic approach to teaching pupils to read. This has been identified repeatedly over time and has not been addressed. The school needs to establish its vision for education in key stage 2, refine curriculum plans and train staff in their delivery. This will help to ensure that pupils in the primary phase receive a more consistently effective education.
- Actions to improve the quality of education over time lack impact and urgency. Weaknesses identified have not been addressed through professional development, support and challenge. The school should ensure that they are more strategic in the way they train and develop staff in order to secure improvement.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135419
<b>DfE registration number</b>	936/6592
<b>Local authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	10286415
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent residential special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 20
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	81
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	22
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Aspris Children's Services Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	John Anderson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Shane Kenny
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£81,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01483 892 061
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.aspriscs.co.uk/unsted-park-school">www.aspriscs.co.uk/unsted-park-school</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:unstedparkschool@aspris.co.uk">unstedparkschool@aspris.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 April to 2 May 2019

## Information about this school

- Unsted Park is an independent special school for pupils with a diagnosis of autism. All pupils have an education, health and care plan with their places funded by a local authority.
- The school's last standard inspection took place in April 2019. Since then, the school received a material change inspection in December 2020 to increase the number of pupils on roll. The last inspection of the school's residential provision took place in January 2023.
- Since the last inspection, there have been several changes in leadership. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are both recently appointed. There has also been a change in the school's nominated governor.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider and two that are unregistered.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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.
- The inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the residential provision.
- Inspectors met with senior staff, including the headteacher and other members of the leadership team. The lead inspector met with representatives of the proprietor body and the school's nominated governor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, personal development and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at the quality of support for pupils with SEND and how the curriculum is adapted to meet their needs. This included a review of paperwork relating to specific pupils and a meeting with the school's special educational needs coordinator.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and

considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- Inspectors checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards. This included a review of paperwork, discussions with leaders and an evaluation of the suitability of the school premises.
- Inspectors considered the school's application for a material change at the same time as this standard inspection.

### **The school's proposed change to the maximum number of pupils**

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**
- The proprietor wishes to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll from 96 to 112.
- No additional building works are required. The existing buildings and classrooms are suitable for the number of pupils proposed. As numbers increase, leaders will ensure that there is adequate staffing and supervision in place.
- While already appropriate, the proprietor has plans to extend and renovate some of their existing classrooms to improve the learning environment for pupils.
- The proprietor has ensured that the relevant standards relating to health and safety continue to be met. This includes compliance with fire regulations and a rigorous approach to risk assessment.
- Although the quality of education requires improvement, the school is likely to continue meeting the standards in part 1 if the proposed increase to the number on roll is approved. This includes those relating to provision for pupils with SEND. There are adequate written plans in place, which take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Chris Ellison, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rachel McDonald-Taylor

Ofsted Inspector

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