

Inspection of Blossom House School

Station Road, Motspur Park, Surrey KT3 6JJ

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and staff describe Blossom House as a very special place to be. It is a school where pupils of all ages flourish in their learning and development. All pupils, no matter which of the three sites they attend, receive an excellent standard of education and care. Pupils feel safe in school. They speak of kind and trusting relationships with staff.

Right from the outset, staff work in impressive collaboration to make sure that each pupil gets what they need to achieve their very best. Every step of the way, pupils benefit from the expertise and knowledge of highly trained therapists, teachers and other staff.

This is a happy school, where pupils develop a real sense of belonging. This is because everyone is valued and their voices are heard. Pupils get involved in all sorts of opportunities which broaden their experiences. For example, older pupils spoke about how the residential to Epping Forest helped them to become more independent. Pupils enjoy visits from authors, trips out into the community and special events such as 'Blossom's Got Talent' and sports competitions. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their excellent behaviour, particularly in the context of some significant challenges.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the difference this school makes to pupils' lives, especially in helping them to prepare for their next steps, including life outside school.

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

The proprietor and leaders have worked effectively to maintain the very high standards throughout the school. Together, with the support of the advisory body, leaders have been successful in growing the school over time. They ensure that all the independent school standards are met consistently. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the relevant requirements of the early years foundation stage.

The 'Blossom Way' is very clear to see, particularly in the passion and determination of all staff. They share the proprietor's vision. Staff, including those who are new to their careers, feel very well supported by leaders. The strong team ethos that exists within the school enables all staff to learn from each other. This collaborative working makes a considerable difference to pupils' all-round development. Staff draw upon each other's expertise to identify and understand pupils' needs.

The school's curriculum has many strands and layers. It is expertly planned so that pupils enjoy success in different subjects, as well as in their speech, language and communication development.

Subjects are planned carefully to ensure that all pupils learn new content in a sensible order. Staff give plenty of opportunities for pupils to go back to things they have been taught previously. Over time, pupils build up their knowledge securely. As they move up the school, pupils get the help they need to make choices about the subjects they wish to study further. As a result of the high-quality support they receive, older pupils do particularly well in a range of qualifications and accreditations.

The school's approach to teaching pupils to read is carefully thought out. Staff help pupils to develop their phonics knowledge in well-planned steps. Although some pupils need a bit longer than others, many pupils learn to read fluently from a range of starting points. Children in the early years enjoyed putting different letters in the right order to make words. They especially liked using the glitter sand to practise writing the words they had created. Pupils enjoyed working as a team to listen out for the sounds in different words. For example, as they watched the moving toys win the race, they spotted that some words contained the same sounds but used different letters, such as 'monster' and 'work'. Over time, pupils' enjoyment of books and reading grows. They particularly enjoy the visits to the library, as well as the opportunity to read to Lollipop, the school's therapy dog.

Staff know precisely how and when to weave in opportunities to strengthen pupils' communication and language. The school sees great success with this. For example, some pupils move from using one or two spoken words to speaking in sentences. For others, pupils are helped from playing alongside their friends to joining whole-class groups. When they are ready, pupils build up the confidence to speak to larger groups. The 'head pupils', for example, proudly talk in assemblies and do 'shout outs' for excellent behaviour and successes in learning.

Children in the early years have fun-packed days with staff who know them really well. Staff are highly skilled at developing children's listening and attention. For example, in preparation for fireworks night, children squealed with delight as they watched the balloons deflate and shoot off around the room. They listened to the sounds that pom-poms made when they exploded from the box. Children practised using key words such as 'more' and 'finished' as the bouncy toy lit up and moved around the floor.

Pupils are taught about diversity. They hear from visitors who are positive role models, including authors and poets. These, among other things, allow pupils to build an understanding of their own needs and the needs of others. Pupils were so proud to see their poems published after winning a national competition where some wrote so imaginatively about their special educational needs.

Across the curriculum, pupils have plenty of opportunities to get out and about. These well-planned visits enable pupils to try out the things they have learned in school and to become independent. For example, pupils visited a transport museum where they learned about road signs and symbols and road safety.

Everyone focuses on supporting pupils for life after Blossom House. As part of the school's careers programme, older pupils all get the chance to take part in work experience. Some sixth-form students spend some of their time at local colleges. They get all the help they need to prepare for the future, including attending mock interviews and visiting places of work. The school owns a café, 'Blossom & Brew', which is located nearby. The 'employability group' as well as pupils in Years 10 and 11 get the chance to do work experience here. They were proud to talk about the way in which this work has developed their understanding of things like customer service, food preparation and marketing.

In an age-appropriate way, pupils learn about healthy relationships. Younger pupils described what makes a good friend, such as kindness and sharing similar interests. Older pupils have been taught about 'consent' and why it is important to say no when they dislike something. The school's 'life skills' curriculum helps to develop pupils' social and cultural awareness. For example, pupils in Year 8 enjoyed a 'preparation for life' day which focused on cleaning and hygiene. Pupils in Year 11 cooked meals from start to finish, including shopping for and preparing the ingredients.

Staff provide enrichment opportunities in a range of ways. For example, younger pupils enjoy gardening and caring for the rabbits. Staff develop pupils' talents and interests. For example, following the careers fair, some pupils took an interest in scuba diving and caring for animals. Staff provided encouragement for these pupils to try diving and to spend time at the stables. The highly positive relationships all around the school contribute to pupils' impressive behaviour. When pupils become upset, angry or anxious, staff use well-established approaches to help pupils return to a state of calm and be ready for learning again. Pupils attend well and make the most of all that school has to offer.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	102694
DfE registration number	315/6076
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	10286376
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	304
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	34
Proprietor	Joanna Burgess OBE
Principal	Joanna Burgess OBE
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,550 to £74,250
Telephone number	020 8946 7348
Website	www.blossomhouseschool.co.uk
Email address	mpadmin@blossomhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 to 13 June 2019

Information about this school

- The school has three sites:
 - Blossom House School, Station Road, Motspur Park, Surrey, KT3 6JJ
 - Blossom House School, Aldenham Street, London, NW1 1PS
 - Blossom House School, 24 Gladstone Road, London, SW19 1QT
- Since the previous inspection, the leadership team has expanded, including the introduction of subject and phase group leaders. The school's advisory body has also been formalised.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school is registered to admit up to 330 pupils.
- The proprietor is also the principal of the school.
- The school has an exemption from the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage.

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.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- 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 held meetings with the proprietor and senior leaders, including leaders of safeguarding, properties, curriculum and human resources. The lead inspector met with the chair of the advisory board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, personal, social, health and economic education, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also sampled other subjects, including humanities and design and technology.
- Inspectors visited and carried out inspection activities on all three of the school's sites. They looked at a range of documentation to check the school's compliance

with the independent school standards.

- Inspectors held meetings with staff and pupils. They considered the responses to the online staff survey. Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted Parent View, and they considered emails received from parents.
- 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.

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 school has applied to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll from 320 to 450.
- This inspection only recommends an increase to the maximum number of pupils to 435. It recommends an additional 50 pupils at the Euston site, an additional 50 pupils at the Motspur Park site and up to an additional five pupils at the Wimbledon site. The reason for this recommendation is based on the space available in existing classrooms on all three sites, as well as the proposed introduction of new classrooms at the Euston site. It is based on inspectors' evaluation of the size of shared spaces available for use on each site, including toilets, therapy rooms and halls. All three sites would cater for the recommended increase in the number of pupils.

Information about the material change inspection

- An inspector visited all three sites to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards. They checked the space available to pupils on all sites. They looked at whether or not the spaces available, including classrooms and other shared areas, are suitable to accommodate the proposed increase to the maximum number of pupils.

Inspection team

Gary Rawlings, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lascelles Haughton	His Majesty's Inspector
Annabel Davies	His Majesty's Inspector

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