

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Imberhorne School

Imberhorne Lane, East Grinstead, West Sussex RH19 1QY

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 October 2024

Outcome

Imberhorne School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their time at school. They feel safe and cared for. Pupils treat each other with respect and appreciate the school's focus on welcoming all. Staff work together to support pupils and take pride in understanding them well. This means that any pupils who need it are sensitively helped. If pupils have any concerns, about their learning or other aspects of their lives, they understand who to speak to.

Pupils rise to the high expectations that the school has for their conduct. Behaviour in lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime is orderly. Pupils enjoy spending this time with their friends or attending the many activities which are on offer. The key stage 3 library is an important venue for pupils to read and relax, as well as develop their fluency in reading lessons.

Students in the sixth form appreciate how they are supported to achieve by staff who understand them and how they learn. Similarly, pupils in both key stages 4 and 5 consider that they are encouraged and helped by staff who carefully build their learning over time. Younger pupils look forward to their move to the 'upper school' and value the thoughtful preparation they receive.

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

The school has developed a highly ambitious curriculum which meets the needs of the school's wide range of pupils. The school has thoughtfully identified the key knowledge pupils should know and the order they should learn it. Vocational education is highly effective and readies pupils for employment or further training. Academic pathways are equally well considered. Sixth-form students move into a wide range of future options. Pupils of all ages enjoy their learning and the thoughtful guidance that they receive.

The school knows its pupils very well. As a result, support is precisely targeted. Pupils recognise this and feel valued as a result. Any problems or concerns are quickly identified by experienced teams. Disadvantaged pupils, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), particularly benefit from this close attention. While the identification of need is accurate, the resulting lesson adaptations are not always as effective as they could be. The school is aware of this and is strengthening the way pupils with SEND are supported through more accurate checking of the impact of the support provided.

Pupils understand the newly simplified behaviour processes. As a result, lessons are calm, and pupils are respectful. The majority of lessons build pupils' knowledge well. Pupils talk with confidence about what they have learned and how to apply their knowledge. However, in a small number of lessons, activity choice does not always help all pupils to learn. This leads to some pupils becoming disengaged. Additionally, disadvantaged pupils, including pupils with SEND, have not always achieved as well as others in some recent national exams. The school is aware of these areas of variability and continues to prioritise training and development of staff to ensure all pupils achieve well.

Sixth-form lessons are absorbing, and students articulate their learning well. Teachers' strong subject knowledge helps to identify and address any misconceptions that pupils may have. Sixth-form students are proud of the contribution they make to their local community through regular volunteering at local care homes and primary schools. They also recognise that these, and the school's plentiful careers advice and guidance, help to prepare them well for their next steps. The school's strong links with local employers result in focused and relevant employer engagement sessions across the school.

The school prioritises pupils' wider education. Pupils' talents and interests are developed through a broad range of clubs and activities. Regular school trips are carefully planned and maximise learning opportunities. For example, a recent Year 9 London trip led pupils to challenge their own preconceptions about status and wealth. Careers education is frequent.

Pupils are taught about keeping safe and planning for their futures. They have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships and can recognise how these change over time. However, some pupils do not gain a secure knowledge of the protected characteristics and fundamental British values. This leaves them less well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders at all levels have a detailed and accurate understanding of the areas which are most in need of development. Governors robustly challenge leaders to ensure the strategies they implement to ensure the school continues to improve. Leaders are deliberately inclusive and ensure that every decision taken is in the best interests of pupils. This is recognised by pupils who consistently talk about the support, community and compassion with which the school operates.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some lessons, activity choice does not support pupils to secure the knowledge set out in the curriculum. This means some pupils do not learn as much as they should. The school must ensure that teachers have the expertise to routinely select the most appropriate activities and resources that enable pupils to secure learning.
- Sometimes the adaptation of teaching is not effective in supporting disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND to access the curriculum. This means they do not learn the important knowledge as intended, and some do not perform well in public examinations. The school should ensure that staff are fully equipped to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of all pupils.
- There is variability in how well the school's wider education helps pupils gain the knowledge they need about fundamental British values and protected characteristics. This means that some pupils are less well prepared for life in modern Britain than others. The school must ensure that all pupils benefit from their wider education so that they are prepared as well as possible for life beyond school.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 the school to be good for overall effectiveness in March 2019.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	126088
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10341633
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,615
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	264
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andy Yule
Headteacher	Matthew Whatford
Website	www.imberhorne.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school currently uses one registered and three unregistered alternative provisions.
- The headteacher and other members of the leadership team and staff took up post since the last inspection.
- The school operates on two sites in East Grinstead.
- The school meets the requirements of provider access legislation which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- 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 inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, curriculum leaders and other staff.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the board of governors, including the chair, and the local authority.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys, as well as speaking to staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Ed Mather, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jon Wood

Ofsted Inspector

Julia Mortimore

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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