

# The Children's Trust School

Tadworth Court, Tadworth, Surrey KT20 5RU

## Inspection dates

24–25 May 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher's outstanding ability to build consensus underpins the remarkable gains made in the school at every level since her appointment, including in governance.
- Governors have stepped up a gear. They know about the quality of pupils' learning because they visit lessons often. Staff have welcomed this approach, recognising governors' redoubled commitment to the school.
- Teachers' plans are thorough. Throughout the day, a multi-disciplinary team approach ensures that pupils' targets are optimised and the level of challenge for each pupil is raised incrementally.
- New and rigorous assessment procedures have resulted in rapidly improved outcomes. Pupils now make good progress, with many accelerating from a low base.
- Staff adopt a team approach to developing effective support for pupils if their engagement in learning wanes. Where pupils lag behind, bespoke approaches are introduced, increasingly to excellent effect.
- A relentless focus on top-quality training and development for all staff has enabled teachers and other staff, including therapists, to raise their game significantly.
- Pupils evidently enjoy their learning and respond well in lessons. They benefit from a high degree of individual support for their well-being. Their trust and confidence in staff are clear for all to see.
- Sixth-form students now benefit from new study programmes that are tailored more appropriately to their age and the next steps in their lives.
- Staff universally support the multi-disciplinary approach to improving pupils' outcomes. However, the approach has not been developed long enough to build a full range of tried and tested intervention strategies.
- Trustees are vigilant and determined to build on the school's successes. They have invested significantly in the development of the leadership of the school, operationally and strategically. However, not all staff are aware of trustees' roles or the extent of their commitment.

## Full report

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

- Build on and sustain improvements secured in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that all aspects of provision are judged outstanding at the next inspection by ensuring that:
  - teachers, medical staff, non-teaching support staff and therapists build on their current successes and maintain a broad 'toolkit' of what works and what does not work with particular pupils
  - all staff are continually encouraged to develop their expertise through the ongoing programme of opportunities for peer evaluation, research, training opportunities and links with similar providers
  - staff develop their understanding of trustees' roles in the strategic development of the school
  - trustees sustain their current level of support for senior leaders and staff through effective strategic planning which both enables and encourages leaders and staff to adopt new approaches, access the most up-to-date and relevant assistive technologies and maximise their use of available resources to the full.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- The headteacher and deputy were appointed in January 2016 after a significant period of declining outcomes, uncertainty and temporary leadership. They provide outstanding leadership. From a very low base, they have inspired staff successfully to become reflective practitioners who are eager to build on their successes and learn from any mistakes.
- Since their appointment, the headteacher and deputy have secured the unwavering commitment of staff. They have developed the workforce through high-quality training. They have also built a strong consensus on what works best for the school's pupils. They lead by example, are highly skilled and are very effective communicators.
- The headteacher sets the bar high for herself, staff and pupils alike. Her expectations are known to and respected by staff. Those staff who have been unwilling or unable to improve their practice have left.
- Since her arrival, the headteacher has introduced a new curriculum and assessment model, and has revamped the staffing structure. Performance management targets have been established and all staff have clear job descriptions. The process has been managed exceptionally well, resulting in a highly motivated and invigorated workforce.
- During the inspection, staff, both new to the school and long-standing, went to great lengths to let inspectors know of their immense pride in working at the school. When asked why, they told inspectors: 'It's to do with the strong leadership. At last, we know what the vision is and we are being supported to get there.'
- Parents, too, were equally enthusiastic in their praise for the new leadership. For example, one parent described the change in her son as 'remarkable' because he is now doing things she once considered 'unimaginable'.
- Teachers, medical staff, teaching assistants and therapists are clear about what is expected of them and why. Senior leaders have skilfully fostered a multi-disciplinary approach to securing the best outcomes for pupils, based on the new highly effective curriculum, which is divided into five skill areas.
- Learning sessions focus on pupils' preparedness for learning and their social and emotional well-being and include the development of cognitive skills, physical and communication skills and the use of 'environment control technology', such as switches. The curriculum is successful because it is highly personalised for each pupil, with routine assessment based on small steps in learning.
- Pupils' learning through assemblies and enrichment activities are carefully thought through to ensure that opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are exploited fully. For example, lunchtime activities, clubs and regular trips out, such as a recent visit to Brighton, help develop pupils' social skills and their awareness of how to keep safe and prepare them for the next steps in their lives beyond school.
- Training sessions on the new curriculum and assessing pupils' progress have been delivered for all staff together. The approach has built confidence in teaching and non-

teaching staff and fostered mutual respect. It has also triggered a recognition of the potency of working as a team. Staff are enthused and morale is exceptionally high.

- All staff, regardless of their specialisms, are responsible for measuring and recording the progress of the individual pupil with whom they are working in each session. A highly effective team approach to identifying and overcoming any barriers to progress is also yielding significant success.
- Leaders track and evaluate the use of all additional funding, such as the pupil premium and the sport premium funding. A detailed analysis shows good and improved rates of progress through targeted music-making therapy for disadvantaged pupils and increased opportunities for physical education tailored to pupils' needs during their time in the primary key stages.
- Learning is observed routinely and often. The deputy head has set out to ensure that all staff see themselves as 'leaders of learning'. A process of peer reviews and visits to similar schools is supporting an ongoing process of self-review and improvements in pupils' progress.
- The headteacher and deputy have also ensured that firm links with other schools offer an external scrutiny of the quality of learning within the school, to support trustees, governors and themselves in their drive for continual improvement and accurate self-evaluation.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governance arrangements are now strong and improving. A review of governance was undertaken shortly after the school was last inspected. At that time, the inspection judgment had come as a surprise. Reflecting upon this, trustees acknowledged that the school was then too separate from other aspects of the trust's functions. Consequently, a new layer of reporting was introduced to keep trustees in touch with the school's effectiveness. An education committee which reports directly to the board of trustees was quickly established.
- Rightly, the trust's chief executive officer (CEO) identified a need for its membership to be driven by new trustees serving dual roles as governors with the relevant skills to monitor and evaluate the school's work accurately. A considerable and worthwhile investment was made in sourcing new governors and also appointing strong and substantive leadership of the school. Governors are very clear about the strengths of the school and what aspects still require improvement.
- Staff appreciate governors' commitment to the school and recognise their role in monitoring the school's effectiveness. However, staff members' awareness of the trust's role and its strategic arm is less well developed.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's training in this respect is led by the trust's social worker, who leaves no stone unturned.
- Senior leaders and trustees have completed safer recruitment training and ensure that new recruits are quizzed at interview about their understanding of child protection and

safeguarding processes. Staff have undergone statutory training, are kept up to date and are familiar with the signs of abuse or distress, and how these might manifest in pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- The school's single central record of staff employed at the school is kept up to date and checked routinely by the school's business manager and the chair of the governing body. Employment records, references and staff's personnel files are meticulously maintained so that records of statutory training and other checks are readily available for those who need access.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the record-keeping associated with serious incidents was found to lack rigour. This no longer applies. Records are monitored and maintained well, with a focus on lessons learned.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good because the planning of learning, care and support of pupils is comprehensive. Staff are increasingly adept at maximising every opportunity to support good learning and progress.
- Learning is characterised by pupils' evident trust and faith in the school's staff. This is translated almost invariably into a visible willingness in pupils to engage and participate to the very best of their abilities.
- High-quality training has ensured that staff focus on communicating consistently and effectively with pupils. For example, feedback is worded carefully to offer positive reinforcement, such as 'good listening, good looking, good exploring'. The words are accompanied by hand cues and facial gestures to ensure pupils' understanding, enjoyment and engagement.
- In learning sessions, all staff are mindful of pupils' personal targets and optimum conditions for learning. The latter include seating positions, touch and, for some pupils, a need for a greater level of quiet. Staff members' routine and careful attention to detail ensures that most pupils' progress is good and improving.
- Staff are very aware of the need to promote 'age-respectful' means of communication and activities. Thus, music therapy, the use of song and the development of sensory awareness are carefully approached to promote equality of opportunity and support pupils' dignity.
- Resources, including control technology and the use of sensory spaces, are exploited fully to extend pupils' concentration and engage and motivate them. In particular, opportunities to 'make music' are often met with joyous enthusiasm.
- Pupils are also encouraged, where possible, to make choices by exposing them to sounds, pictures, textures and smells that they may like or reject, thereby enabling them to express a view or a preference.
- Staff gather evidence of pupils' progress in each session. They record pupils' progress and engagement against targets and colour-code each session accordingly. Where pupils lag behind, staff identify why. If adjustments are agreed, actions are tracked and pupils' success is evaluated.

- Senior leaders ensure the accuracy of staff members' assessments of pupils' learning through a process of internal and external verification in which they have been trained. Inspectors were able to scrutinise impressive evidence of extensive external verification from links with five other special schools.
- Staff are becoming increasingly adept at identifying and agreeing ways to move pupils on when they get 'stuck'. Nevertheless, the potential of the new curriculum model and the approach to developing outstanding learning have yet to be fully realised.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Visits to learning sessions offered a palpable flavour of pupils' enjoyment in learning. During the inspection, inspectors were also able to observe ways in which staff focus on building pupils' resilience and challenge them to take further steps in their learning successfully.
- Pupils clearly enjoy school and often push themselves to the limit, even when they are not at their best medically. Attendance rates vary from full attendance to below average. Very low attendance rates are attributable to severe and sometimes life-limiting ill health.
- Staff know the pupils well and leaders are careful to provide continuity of care, support and teaching wherever possible. Well-developed classroom routines ensure that pupils have faith in the staff and feel safe. Staff and parents with whom inspectors met expressed confidence in the school's systems to keep pupils safe.
- Since the last inspection, the school's internal accommodation has been repainted and tidied up. Leaders have made sure that the environment is bright, cheery and reflects pupils' achievements through well-chosen photographic displays of their work. Since her arrival, the headteacher has ensured the availability of sensory spaces which did not exist in the past. Nevertheless, not all aspects of the provision are fully fit for purpose.
- Risk assessments for the use of lifting equipment and other resources, such as resonance boards, are very thorough.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good and improving. There is no exclusion from the school or unauthorised absence.
- Pupils respond positively in lessons because their learning, care and support targets are personalised and they are given enough time to engage and respond. This was not the case at the time of the previous inspection, when it was reported that pupils often became frustrated in lessons.
- Where pupils' levels of engagement are flagged as weak or less than good over time, the multi-disciplinary team evaluates why this might be and puts together a support

plan to bring about improvements. Inspectors were able to scrutinise case study evidence of the significant and growing success of this approach.

Leaders have ensured that staff, parents and, where possible, pupils have an understanding and involvement in the process of reviewing pupils' education, health and care plans. As a result, pupils' confidence, responses to learning and transitions are improving.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils' outcomes are significantly below those of their peers in mainstream schools and most other special schools. This is as a result of their extensive and complex special educational needs. Nevertheless, pupils' progress from their starting points is good and improving.
- In the past, baseline assessment was not undertaken and target-setting was haphazard. Senior leaders have, therefore, reassessed all current pupils in order to gauge pupils' progress accurately and set meaningful targets.
- Leaders and staff track and evaluate pupils' progress assiduously, ensuring that there are no significant differences between the achievements of groups of pupils. They evaluate closely the impact of pupil premium funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress as their peers.
- Girls, boys, the most able, disadvantaged and the most able disadvantaged, and looked after pupils all progress equally well because the curriculum is tailored to their particular needs. Staff are growing daily in their abilities to support pupils' learning exceptionally well.
- In order to maximise their achievement, pupils are placed in classes according to their key stages. Each class has a qualified teacher and a number of other learning support staff, therapists and, sometimes, medical staff present in lessons throughout the day.
- Staff record sounds, experiences and positioning that affect pupils' engagement and enjoyment. They also record any notable changes in preferences or responses. The approach ensures that new challenges are well received and build pupils' progress successfully.
- Communication is rightly given a high priority within the new curriculum. In some instances, pupils are able to use touch, for example by touching an iPad screen, to communicate a preference. On other occasions, pupils learn how to extend their intentional communication skills through the use of eye gazing, vocalisation or body movement.
- Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy provide important opportunities to extend pupils' physical skills. For example, pupils are able to build their strength through accessing standing frames, wedges, resonance boards and soft mats during physical education sessions. The type of resource used is linked carefully to each pupil's individual needs.
- Since joining the school, senior leaders have ensured that learning time throughout the day is maximised for all pupils other than those whose medical needs preclude full participation. This has meant that the practice of providing extra 'sleep times' for pupils

across all key stages at lunchtime has been halted. These pupils now benefit from sessions such as music therapy to enhance their readiness to learn in the afternoons.

## **16 to 19 study programmes**

**Good**

- As with the rest of the school, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form is now good and improving. Leadership of this aspect of the school's provision is excellent. Due thought has been given to the necessary curriculum changes to ensure that students benefit from age-respectful activities and resources, with the next steps in their lives in mind.
- Sixth-form students have a dedicated area and are also able to participate in work experience on-site and in the community at 'Jo's café'. Students also benefit from lunchtime clubs and activities, such as the sensory, vinyl-listening and relaxation sessions, in which students make a listening choice from a selection of vinyl records. This is held just before the end of the lunch break.
- Leaders work closely with the parents of sixth-form students to ensure that students' next steps are carefully planned. Many students move into the young adults' provision, 'Cedar', within the trust. Those that move elsewhere are supported closely in their choices so that their needs will be met successfully.
- Leaders have recently appointed a manager to ensure that the transitions from the 16 to 19 study programmes into Cedar are carefully researched, supported and discussed. Feedback from parents has already been positive.
- Outcomes in the sixth form are good and improving. Students' progress from their starting points is tracked and measured carefully. Opportunities are provided for students to follow accredited courses, such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) award scheme, which help to develop their life skills.
- Staff ensure that students have opportunities to take part in the wider society through carefully planned and accompanied outings, such as to the local shops and supermarkets to purchase food items.
- Students behave well in the sixth form. Staff attend very carefully to students' well-being and personal development needs. Necessary changes to the curriculum have helped make this possible.

## School details

Unique reference number	134902
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10024524

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Toby Mullins
Headteacher	Samantha Newton
Telephone number	01737 365 810
Website	<a href="http://www.thechildrenstrust.org.uk/thechildrenstrust-school">www.thechildrenstrust.org.uk/thechildrenstrust-school</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:school@thechildrenstrust.org.uk">school@thechildrenstrust.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	11–12 December 2014

## Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The Children’s Trust School is a smaller-than-average special school. It is part of a registered charity known as ‘The Children’s Trust’.
- The school was established to provide education for pupils aged three to 19 years of age with profound and multiple learning difficulties, physical disabilities and complex medical needs. Many have additional sensory impairments. All pupils have education,

health and care plans. Some pupils have life-limiting conditions. There are currently 10 students in the sixth form.

- Although the school is registered to provide early years education, there are no pupils currently registered.
- Pupils are placed in the school by several local authorities across a wide geographical area.
- The school offers a coordinated site service from doctors, nurses and therapists.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day's notice.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, a group of teachers, a group of therapists, a group of teaching assistants, three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, a trustee and the CEO.
- Inspectors observed learning in all classes and looked at teachers' plans, annual reviews and case studies of interventions. Assessment information and tracking data were scrutinised for each pupil.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to be considered. The lead inspector met with one parent and spoke on the telephone with another. She also looked at feedback from the school's recent in-house parental questionnaire.
- The lead inspector took account of the views of staff and 30 responses to the staff questionnaire. She also spoke with a governor on the telephone.
- The lead inspector looked at a range of documentation, including safeguarding documentation and case study materials and records of referrals to the local authority children's services, and spoke with a representative of Surrey local authority on the telephone.
- Inspectors spoke with the school's improvement partner and a headteacher who is also a trustee. They scrutinised the school's development plans and self-evaluation documentation.

## Inspection team

Lesley Farmer, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sue Bzikot

Ofsted Inspector

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