

Inspection of The Link School

138 Croydon Road, Beddington, Croydon, Surrey CR0 4PG

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 June 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The principal of this school is Sandy Turner. This school is part of the Orchard Hill College Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), John Prior, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Raymond Leclercq.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' positive well-being is central to everything this school does. All staff are aspirational for what pupils can achieve. They understand that their roles contribute to strengthening pupils' self-esteem and confidence. As a result, many pupils' resilience and engagement with education improves over time.

Staff have purposeful working relationships with pupils. They get to know pupils' interests and strengths. They become acutely aware of each pupil's challenges. They use this knowledge of pupils to personalise programs for learning and personal development. Staff support pupils to recognise that they may need help. They equip pupils with the communication and strategies to be able to help themselves. Staff empower pupils to make choices, build independence and express their feelings. This aids pupils to manage their behaviour and emotions. As a result, pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Furthermore, incidents of behaviour, in and outside of the classroom, for many pupils reduce over time.

The school provides meaningful educational experiences for pupils beyond the classroom. Regular outings to generalise learning include visits to the community shops, places of worship and local animal centres. Pupils visit museums and galleries. They have opportunities for overnight stays at activity centres. All this also supports their preparation for adulthood.

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

Subject curriculums and the school's robust personal and social development curriculum are ambitious and well ordered. They are designed to help pupils to know and be able to do more over time. Staff skilfully encourage pupils to engage in learning. They set learning goals tailored to pupils' needs and provide activities that interest and motivate pupils. Pupils have many opportunities to practise and recall what they have learned before. As a result, pupils generally become more confident in learning new knowledge and skills. Pupils routinely achieve well against their personal goals. Pupils develop their academic and personal resilience.

The curriculum in the sixth form is designed to prepare students for adulthood. Students follow personalised learning programs that focus on developing their understanding of community, work, leisure and relationships. Students have opportunities to apply this learning in real contexts. For instance, they run enterprises such as car washing and preparing meals. They attend local colleges to experience vocational courses, such as construction and animal care.

Many pupils, and students in the sixth form, leave the school with some qualifications and accreditations. However, the accreditation pathways to support them with their next steps in education, employment or training are underdeveloped.

The school prioritises the teaching of reading. The staff team supports pupils to understand that reading promotes their independence. Staff check pupils' reading skills,

including phonics knowledge, regularly. Staff identify if pupils are falling behind or have gaps in their reading skills. They help pupils to keep up through tailored reading sessions. This includes a systematic approach to teaching phonics.

Pupils have many opportunities and experiences that broaden their talents and interests. They take part in sporting competitions and theatrical performances. They attend clubs such as choir, sports and yoga. The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop their responsibilities. They learn how to stay safe online and about the dangers of grooming. Pupils collect donations for charity. They can become members of the school council, eco reps and safeguarding champions. These opportunities further develop pupils' character and self-esteem.

The multi-agency team of teachers, therapists and health professionals deliver regular staff training. They ensure staff have the expertise they need to support pupils' communication, behaviour and well-being needs. As a result, staff adapt learning, resources and approaches effectively. This helps pupils to maintain their focus and manage their emotions. Learning in classrooms proceeds with minimal interruption.

A distinguishing feature of this school is how well staff help pupils to re-engage with their education. Some pupils have had a negative experience of education prior to joining this school. Consequently, some pupils have missed a significant amount of education time in school. Staff work alongside pupils, their families and other professionals. They establish individualised attendance plans, which help pupils to settle into school life. This includes helping pupils to develop peer relationships through activities such as 'Dungeons and Dragons club' or paired therapy sessions. This helps pupils settle comfortably into school and encourages them to attend regularly. This also contributes to developing pupils' social skills.

The trust, governors, executive leaders and school leaders have systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of the school. They ensure that there is an embedded culture of professional development, which is valued and appreciated by the staff team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Opportunities for pupils and students in the sixth form to work towards and achieve accreditations are limited. This reduces the gains that some of the oldest pupils make. The school should ensure that it identifies and embeds appropriate accreditation pathways.

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	144851
Local authority	Sutton
Inspection number	10379170
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	15
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Raymond Leclercq
CEO of the trust	John Prior
Principal	Sandy Turner
Website	www.thelinkschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	27 and 28 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is part of the Orchard Hill College Academy Trust
- The school operates across four sites: The Link Primary, 138 Croydon Road, Beddington, CR0 4PG; The Link Secondary, 82-86 Croydon Road, Beddington, CR0 4PD; The Link Satellite Centre Primary, Mollison Drive, Wallington, SM6 9JN; The Link Satellite Centre Secondary, 3 Carew Manor Cottages, Church Road, Wallington, SM6 7NH.
- The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and personal, social and health education.
- For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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 met with senior leaders, teachers and the wider school team.
- Inspectors met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with the chair of trustees and other members of the trust board.
- Inspectors met with the representatives from the trust, including the CEO and Executive Director of Quality and Standards.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents and staff. They also spoke with pupils.

Inspection team

Kieran Bird, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jacquie Fairhurst	Ofsted Inspector
Joanna Tarrant	Ofsted Inspector

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