

Inspection of The Loddon School

Wildmoor Lane, Sherfield-on-Loddon, Hook, Hampshire RG27 0JD

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

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 thrive emotionally, socially and academically here. Relationships between staff and pupils are extremely kind and caring. What others might see as a tiny step, can often be a great challenge for pupils. The way that staff enable pupils to overcome these challenges is impressive. They have an in-depth knowledge of individual pupil's needs and an expert understanding of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Staff anticipate when a pupil may be growing anxious. They put in place highly effective calming strategies. As a result, pupils flourish and blossom.

Leaders have created a highly nurturing and safe environment. Leaders have high expectations. There are hardly any incidents of unkind behaviour. One parent described the school as a place where 'staff simply work miracles because they do not see any barriers to what our children can do and achieve'.

Pupils relish working in the woodland area, where they grow a variety of fruits, vegetables and salads. They gleefully help in the paddocks by looking after the pigs, chickens, horses and goats. Pupils enjoy taking a stroll on the sensory trail, playing on the magnificent pirate ship, working out on the outdoor gym or relaxing in the tranquillity garden.

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

Pupils exceed all expectations during their time in this outstanding school. All pupils who attend The Loddon School have a diagnosis of ASD as well as complex social and communication difficulties. They also have additional severe learning difficulties, including acute medical needs. Pupils are all non-verbal. Most have a history of failed school placements or long periods of non-attendance. However, right from the moment they walk through the school gates, pupils embark on an extraordinary journey of achievements. This results in exceptional accomplishments in all areas of their lives.

Leaders have designed an extremely innovative and aspirational curriculum in all subjects. They make sure that pupils are provided with a unique and personalised educational experience which, over time, transforms their lives. For instance, through the 'working day' strategy, pupils understand that each waking moment is an important experience towards preparation for adult life. Additionally, the 'communication books' teach them how to make healthy choices. For the first time in their lives, most pupils learn to communicate their ideas effectively and become positive, highly engaged independent learners. They all learn to sign with Makaton. Pupils demonstrate how much they appreciate the helpful routines through vocalisations and by laughing, clapping and smiling. Over time, they become positively motivated and immerse themselves wholeheartedly in all that school has to offer. Pupils leave school extremely well prepared for the next stage of their lives. For instance, they go on to work-related learning opportunities as well as apprenticeships.

There is a calm, respectful and upbeat ethos around school. Lessons are highly engaging. Staff provide pupils with resources, equipment and materials that capture their natural curiosity and interests. Teachers use their expert training to adapt activities around the emotional, physical and sensory needs of each pupil. Staff take time to help pupils embed the important knowledge and skills they need to remember well. A number of well-considered, specialist therapeutic interventions blend superbly into everyday routines. Pupils thrive through this bespoke approach which helps them to successfully overcome any barriers to learning.

Leaders have put reading and communication at the core of pupils' learning. They ensure that all staff have expert training to teach phonics. Through a structured multi-sensory phonics programme, staff skilfully help pupils to learn to recognise and begin to use phonic sounds to identify objects. Staff introduce pupils to nursery rhymes and songs, which pupils appreciate and remember. Pupils listen excitedly to the stories staff read. They join in and act out the parts that they particularly enjoy. Pupils have a range of activities to help them communicate through pictures, symbols and words. They value this.

Leaders place pupils' personal development at the heart of everything they do. The curriculum is enriched in a variety of ways, including through well-planned educational visits. Pupils learn about festivals and celebrate events throughout the year. They learn about the natural world around them. They work with professionals from a wide range of fields. For instance, musicians, professional sports athletes, artists, storytellers and photographers visit regularly. Pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. They learn about road and water safety. Pupils enjoyed creating scarecrows, which they donated to the local farm. Currently, they are taking delight in making ornaments to sell at the school Christmas market to raise money for charities in the area. The school has appropriate plans in place to comply with statutory guidance on relationships and sex education and health education.

Trustees are highly supportive of the headteacher and staff. They are united in their vision to provide the very best opportunities for pupils and their families. Trustees bring a range of expertise to the school. They use their skills very effectively to continually enhance the school's facilities and wider offer. The trustees ensure that a suitable accessibility plan is in place which complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Staff work extremely well as one proactive cohesive team which is fully invested in the welfare, well-being and success of each pupil. Staff morale is sky high.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Parents say that their children are safe in school. Regular communication from staff reassures parents that pupils' welfare and care needs are met fully. Leaders work extremely effectively with external agencies and the placing local authorities. They check meticulously to ensure that all staff are qualified to work with children.

Staff know how to report concerns about pupils' welfare and understand the additional vulnerabilities of pupils with ASD and other complex needs. The use of individual risk assessments and behaviour support plans for each pupil means that all staff always understand how to manage potential risks to pupils' safety promptly.

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	116589
DfE registration number	850/6005
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10243562
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Loddon Foundation
Chair	Steve Fussey
Headteacher	Dr Gill Barrett
Annual fees	£279,925
Telephone number	01256 884600
Website	www.loddonschool.org
Email address	info@loddonschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 to 12 July 2018

Information about this school

- The Loddon School is an independent school which also provides on-site, all-year residential provision for pupils aged eight to 19.
- Pupils are referred to the school by their local authority, which funds their place. There are significantly more boys than girls at the school.
- All pupils have a diagnosis of ASD and an education, health and care plan. All pupils have severe communication difficulties, and many also have complex medical needs.
- The school provides a range of therapies, including occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and music therapy.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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.

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 met with the headteacher and the senior leaders. The lead inspector met with three trustees, including the chair of trustees. She also spoke on the telephone with the headteachers of three virtual schools and with officers from two of the local authorities that place pupils at the school. The lead inspector also met with the care home manager.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, physical education, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during visits to classrooms, during breaktimes and as pupils moved around the school.
- There were very few responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. The lead inspector spoke to some parents on the telephone. Inspectors also considered the views of staff during meetings with them.

- The lead inspector checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked with leaders responsible for safeguarding. She also considered safeguarding documents and records.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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