

Inspection of Undershaw Education Trust

Undershaw, Portsmouth Road, Hindhead, Surrey GU26 6AQ

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 February 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Sixth-form provision	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils speak proudly of their school. During the inspection, they happily told inspectors about their friends, their teachers and their favourite subjects. Pupils have often had an unsettled period of education prior to joining the school. Adults provide skilful and sensitive support to help them to adjust to school life. Pupils feel secure and valued. They say that adults look after them well.

Staff combine high expectations with warmth and good humour. Pupils respond well. They are keen to learn and ambitious for the future. One pupil, for example, talked to inspectors excitedly about the progress he had made since joining the school and about his determination to achieve GCSE qualifications in the future. Pupils become increasingly independent and self-assured as they move up through the school. Those in the sixth form are well prepared for the next step in their education or career.

Trusting and respectful relationships underpin the school's work. Pupils are friendly, polite and interested in visitors. They behave well most of the time. Leaders take any concerns about bullying very seriously. They act swiftly and monitor potential difficulties closely. Staff provide high-quality support for pupils who are anxious or worried. Pupils enjoy playing games and socialising in the school's attractive and well-maintained grounds during breaktimes.

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

The acting headteacher leads a strong staff team who share her vision for the school's future. She is steering the school through a period of rapid change with great skill. Her determination to secure the best education for every pupil is clear. The acting headteacher has introduced much-needed improvements since her appointment. For example, the school's curriculum has been overhauled to ensure that it is sufficiently aspirational for all pupils. Developments in the curriculum, including opportunities to study subjects to a higher level of qualification, are already having a positive impact on pupils' learning, self-esteem and confidence. The work in their books shows a marked improvement in the quality of learning since the start of the academic year. Leaders recognise, however, the need to provide further training to ensure that the revised curriculum is delivered consistently well, including the revised reading and mathematics programmes. An element of variation in curriculum delivery means that pupils learn less well than they should sometimes. The sixth-form curriculum is customised carefully to support pupils' needs and aspirations.

Pupils' reading skills vary widely on entry to the school and some pupils are reluctant to read. The teaching of reading is tailored to support individual pupils' needs and includes the teaching of a range of effective strategies, including phonics. Leaders have improved procedures for assessing pupils' reading skills on entry to the school. This means that staff can pinpoint and address gaps in pupils' reading more precisely than in the past. Some pupils have fallen behind in their reading during the

pandemic. Leaders have prioritised support to ensure that these pupils catch up quickly. Work to ensure that sixth-form pupils have the reading skills needed to tackle forthcoming examinations has been particularly successful.

Leaders have recently introduced a reliable and well-sequenced mathematics programme to address historical weaknesses in this subject. This is working well. Teachers are much clearer than previously about what they need to teach and when.

The school's broad curriculum supports pupils' personal development well. For example, the music curriculum helps to build pupils' confidence while providing opportunities for them to develop personal interests and expertise. This was evident during the inspection when the music club gave an enthusiastic rendition of the school song. The school promotes fundamental British values effectively through its personal, social, health and economic curriculum and other activities, such as the work of the school council. Pupils learn about different cultures and beliefs. They develop the skills needed to express their own views with increasing confidence while respecting the views of others. The school complies fully with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Pupils make impressive gains in the development of confidence, self-esteem and independence. Courses in subjects such as food hygiene and employability, combined with carefully chosen work placement opportunities, help to prepare pupils for the future. A strong focus on developing key life and employability skills in the sixth form ensures that pupils are well prepared personally, as well as academically, for the next stages of education or employment. All sixth-form pupils went on to a college or a supported internship placement in 2021. The school's outreach programme enables staff to monitor how pupils settle into their chosen destinations. A member of staff was present when inspectors spoke with pupils. Their reassuring presence meant that pupils felt comfortable talking with a visitor.

Leaders have implemented the statutory guidance on relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) fully. The teaching of RSHE takes careful account of pupils' particular needs and circumstances, with specialist input from health professionals where appropriate.

Revisions to the school's behaviour policy, combined with well-focused training, mean that staff manage behaviour consistently and effectively. Lessons are calm and orderly so that teachers and pupils can get on with their work. Adults provide sensitive support for those pupils who sometimes find learning in the classroom difficult.

The turbulence of the past year, including high staff turnover and several changes in leadership, have caused understandable concern for some parents. Leaders and governors are working hard to address these concerns. Most parents who completed the survey, Ofsted Parent View, are positive about the school and several refer to noticeable improvements in recent months. For example, one commented: 'Undershaw is becoming a truly exceptional school for children with special

educational needs and/or disabilities. My child has flourished during her time in the school.'

The chair of governors has introduced greater rigour to governors' monitoring roles since the previous inspection. A clear schedule of activities to check the school's work has been established. Training has ensured that governors know what to look for when visiting the school. The proprietor is working closely with the acting headteacher to support developments in the school's work and has ensured that the independent school standards continue to be met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff give pupils' safety a very high priority. The school premises are secure and maintained to a high standard. Well-established routines mean that pupils and staff can work safely. Pupils are well supervised, both indoors and out. Staff are alert to pupils' well-being and report any concerns promptly. Leaders provide regular training and updates so that staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding issues. Teaching and therapeutic staff work effectively as a team to provide high-quality support for pupils. The safeguarding policy complies with current guidelines and is posted on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Historical weaknesses in the school's curriculum mean that pupils have not always achieved as well as they should academically. The acting headteacher quickly recognised weaknesses in the school's curriculum when she was appointed. Since then, she has worked constructively with her staff team to revise the curriculum so that it is sufficiently ambitious. For example, pupils now have more options to study subjects to GCSE level than was previously the case. However, leaders know that more training for staff is needed to ensure that the new curriculum is delivered securely and effectively. They should implement their plans to strengthen staff's subject knowledge through training.

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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	134833
DfE registration number	936/6584
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10215997
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Undershaw Education Trust
Chair	Claire Cookson
Headteacher	Emma West
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,380 to £46,317
Telephone number	01428 609083
Website	www.undershaw.education
Email address	hello@undershaw.education
Date of previous inspection	25 to 27 June 2019

Information about this school

- Undershaw is an independent special school for pupils with mild to moderate physical or learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Most pupils are placed at the school by Surrey and Hampshire local authorities.
- The school operates across two sites within a short distance of each other.
- Pupils have opportunities to learn employability skills in The Cookie Bar, a local social enterprise café.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- Almost all teachers have been appointed in the past 12 months.
- The school currently has an acting headteacher, who was appointed in April 2021.
- The school has changed its name since the previous inspection. It was formerly named Stepping Stones School Hindhead.
- The last standard inspection took place in June 2019, when the school's overall effectiveness was judged good and all of the independent school standards were found to be met.

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 the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- The inspectors held a wide range of meetings during the inspection. These included meetings with the acting headteacher, the proprietor and other school leaders. They also met with two governors, including the chair of governors. The inspectors spoke with staff, pupils and parents during the inspection. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with a local authority representative.
- The inspection team looked closely at the following subjects when considering the quality of education: reading, mathematics, history and music. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and reviewed curriculum plans.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, during breaktimes and as pupils moved around the school. The inspectors visited both sites during the inspection.

- The inspection team considered 56 responses to Ofsted’s online parent survey and accompanying free-text messages. They also considered responses to the staff and pupil surveys.
- The lead inspector checked the single central record and talked with leaders responsible for safeguarding. She also considered safeguarding documents and records.
- The inspection team reviewed a range of documentation, including policies and documents associated with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Alice Roberts

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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