

Inspection of Royal Alexandra and Albert School

Gatton Park, Reigate, Surrey RH2 0TD

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils at Royal Alexandra and Albert School are happy and want to do well. They learn to be respectful and considerate of others and diversity is celebrated. Pupils enjoy taking on positions of responsibility and socialise well at social times in the school's beautiful grounds.

Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum, enriched by a vast array of engaging clubs, trips, activities and challenges on offer. However, past weaknesses in the leadership of the curriculum and careers education mean that too few pupils study a wide enough range of academic subjects at GCSE.

Subject leaders have developed plans that set out what pupils should learn and when. However, there are weaknesses in the teaching of reading and in teachers' use of assessment. Consequently, some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), struggle in lessons because they have gaps in their knowledge and skills. Standards in the sixth form are good; teachers ensure that sixth-formers are challenged and supported well in their chosen subjects.

Pupils understand and respect the school's behaviour system of consequences and rewards. Bullying is rare and nearly all pupils say that there are trusted adults whom they can turn to should they have any concerns.

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

The new interim executive headteacher and interim headteacher have provided experienced leadership since September while governors seek to recruit a new substantive headteacher this year. New senior leaders have focused on boosting leadership capacity and supporting staff after a particularly challenging last year. They have rightly identified that governors require more accurate information to help them hold leaders to account more effectively for the quality of education at the school.

Leaders have worked to improve curriculum plans across the broad range of subjects on offer. Strengths exist in the plans for design and technology and science. Here, subject leaders know just what they want pupils to learn and in what order, and most teachers explain subject matter and check pupils' understanding well. Similarly, strong practice in the sixth form enables students to progress well in their chosen subjects.

In some subjects, including English and history, the curriculum is at an earlier stage of development. Subject leaders with responsibility for key stages 2 and 3 have only recently started to work together to sequence learning across the years. There are weaknesses in the leadership and teaching of reading in the junior school. As a result, pupils at an earlier stage of learning to read, including some with SEND, do

not make the progress they should. Some struggle to access all areas of the curriculum.

The school's approach to assessment means that feedback does not always come in time or in sufficient depth to help pupils. Too often, teachers do not check that all pupils can confidently remember important knowledge and skills before introducing new information. While many of the most able pupils make progress over time, others struggle to keep up and so develop gaps in their knowledge. There are better assessment practices in the sixth form which more effectively meet the needs of students.

Leaders have suitable systems in place to support pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. They meet regularly with subject leaders to review and adjust the curriculum to help ensure that it meet the needs of these pupils. Useful information is shared with teachers to support pupils' learning in the classroom. However, variability in teachers' questioning and feedback skills means that these pupils' needs are not always met well in lessons.

The school's co-curricular programme of activities is particularly impressive. Pupils benefit from participating in a rich array of artistic and sporting activities as well as horse riding, cadets, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and much more. There is a well-planned curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) across the school. Staff and pupils share a genuine commitment across the school to promote a sense of community and equality.

Current weaknesses in the school's provision for careers education, advice and guidance mean that pupils from Year 8 onwards have not gained access to their full entitlement. Limited guidance means that too few opt to study a sufficient range of academic subjects at GCSE. New senior leaders have plans to address this but have not yet had time to implement them. Provision is stronger in the sixth form. Here, tutors ensure that students receive suitable information and support to help them with their next steps in education and/or employment.

Pupils' behaviour is typically good across the school; pupils and sixth-formers are respectful and well-mannered. In classrooms, they are typically keen to learn and most engage well with the tasks set by their teachers. Most pupils respect the school's rules, rewards and routines and so any disruption is rare.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff receive regular and appropriate training on safeguarding. Appropriate school systems are in place to record and share any concern that staff may have about pupils. Safeguarding leaders seek and secure support from external agencies when necessary to ensure pupils get the help they need. Leaders act swiftly and decisively to support vulnerable pupils.

Some aspects of record-keeping relating to safeguarding or pupils who have left the school were found to contain gaps or were poorly organised. New interim senior leaders have plans to address this.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The teaching of early reading in key stage 2 is weak because the school lacks a coherent strategy for teaching phonics. In addition, there are inconsistencies in the curriculum progression from key stages 2 to 3 in English and in other subject areas. Consequently, pupils, particularly those at an earlier stage of learning to read, struggle as they progress through the school. Staff training and better communication between teachers in the junior and secondary phases are needed to address this.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 11 is not used well enough to accurately diagnose what pupils know, can remember and do. Too often, teachers fail to modify their teaching strategies in time to address pupils' learning needs. Training is required to ensure that all teachers make better use of assessment to deliver lessons that more accurately meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those with low prior attainment and pupils with SEND.
- Governors lack a sufficiently broad range of information to robustly challenge leaders about the quality of education. In addition, the low priority given to careers education, advice and guidance by previous leaders means that the academic curriculum provision in key stage 4 does not meet the school's ambitious aims. Too few pupils study the full range of subjects within the English Baccalaureate, which limits their potential next steps. Better information for governors and the adoption of new leaders' plans to improve GCSE options and careers advice for pupils are required.
- Some of senior leaders' monitoring and record-keeping is incomplete, or the information is stored in more than one location. Consequently, leaders' actions risk not precisely meeting the educational and well-being needs of all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable pupils. More robust systems of record-keeping and monitoring by leaders, and better information for governors, are urgently needed to rectify this.

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

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 125279 |
| Local authority | Surrey |
| Inspection number | 10201342 |
| Type of school | All-through |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 7 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1125 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 217 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | John Billingham |
| Interim Headteacher | James Malley |
| Website | www.raa-school.co.uk/ |
| Date of previous inspection | 21 April 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection in 2016, there have been several changes to the senior leadership team. The headteacher left the school last year. Since September, the South East Surrey Schools Education Trust has been supporting the school by providing an interim executive headteacher and headteacher.
- The school uses two alternative providers.
- The school does not meet the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 of the school.
- Deep dives were conducted in English, mathematics, science, reading, history and design and technology. As part of these, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils about their work and met with teaching staff to talk about their approach to designing and delivering the curriculum. In addition, inspectors reviewed leaders' plans for the provision of PSHE.
- Meetings were held with the interim executive headteacher, interim headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, special educational needs coordinator and other members of teaching and support staff.
- The lead inspector held a remote meeting with three members of the governing body. Records of governing body meetings were reviewed.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils and sixth-formers to discuss their views about many different aspects of their school. Inspectors also held informal conversations with pupils at break and lunchtime.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff represented in meetings and the responses to Ofsted's surveys were considered.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's policies and practices and met with safeguarding leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding. Records of safeguarding incidents were scrutinised and discussed. Inspectors also reviewed the school records of the recruitment checks made on adults working in the school.

Inspection team

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|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Matthew Newberry, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Richard Carlyle | Ofsted Inspector |
| Alan Johnson | Ofsted Inspector |
| Mo Galway | Ofsted Inspector |
| Shaun Jarvis | Her Majesty's Inspector |

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