

School Lane Surgery Feedback

March 2024

In March 2024 we visited School Lane Surgery in Thetford to speak with patients about their experience with health and social care services. From this visit we received 17 reviews for the surgery. The reviews have an average star rating of 3.8 out of five.

Healthwatch Norfolk Officers who visited the surgery noted:

The waiting area was well-lit with plenty of seating, although it wasn't immediately clear where you should go to speak to the reception team. The Practice Manager already has plans to improve this.

The complaints, suggestions and Family and Friends forms are prominently placed in the waiting area.



There was an on-site Portuguese interpreter.

Patients are unaware that the surgery and pharmacy are independent of each other, due to them sharing the building.

Staff at the surgery were praised by the people we spoke to and we heard how they were often helpful. However, the main issue with the surgery that we heard about was difficulties being able to access appointments and struggling with the appointment system. For example one person told us that they were *"in A&E over Christmas and they told me to see a GP if I became unwell again"* but they told us how they *"can't get in through the system and they won't make any exceptions. I feel I'm going to have to go to hospital just to be seen"*.

The reviews are displayed in the table below and can be found on our website www.healthwatchnorfolk.co.uk. A response to this report from the surgery follows the table of reviews (page 7).



ID	Title	Review	Rating
229127	Nurse appointment	I saw the nurse, it was very good. She was friendly and explained everything to me. I moved from the other surgery and it's much better here.	5
228844	Always lovely	It's always lovely, the Drs are nice.	5
228839	Excellent	Good service as usual, very good. Excellent!	5
228838	Always amazing	They're always amazing - absolutely perfect and very helpful. They usually fit me in for appointments.	5
228831	Brilliant nurse	I saw the asthma nurse and she's brilliant.	5
228818	Brilliant	People don't realise how many patients they've got to deal with. Nine out of ten times they see me the same day. They're very good. There's several GPs who have been here years so there's continuity of care. The system in place where more trivial things are sent to the pharmacy isn't working though. I was advised to go to the pharmacy and the pharmacist didn't really look at it properly and then sent me back to the doctors.	5
229147	Doing their best	Been here 46 years. They're doing their best under the circumstances. Its difficult to get an appointment. The problem is with only having one phone line I think. That's the only problem I have, They need 2 separate lines. The doctors are very good.	4

228852	Long waits for call backs	It's good, but when you phone you have to wait for someone to call you back. This can take all day which can be an issue, especially if you need a prescription.	4
228842	I'm put off getting an appointment	I've not called when I've needed a Dr. as other times I've not been able to get an appointment. I'm put off by that and having to phone in, or go online as I can't do that. Drs aren't the same anymore, the NHS is ran down.	4
228836	Today was good	Today was good. It does seem like a waste of time when you see a trainee who takes all the information and then a full Dr. comes in and overrides the diagnosis. But, it was good overall.	4
228821	Can't fault them	Can't fault them. The GPs and receptionists are ok although there's sometimes confusion between them and the pharmacy.	4
228811	People are excellent, system isn't	Today it's been good, the people have been friendly and helpful. In general I really dislike how they do the appointments - you send an online message and wait for a call back and sometimes it feels like it's not important enough. I've waited 6 hours before and missed the call, and when I rang in to say I missed it I was told I had to wait 'til the next day and start again. The email notifications from their website can be overwhelming as I'm not sure how to clear them? I'm happy with the people. If you get to see a Dr or talk to the receptionists they are excellent most of the time. The system is not!	4

228815	I felt comfortable and safe	<p>Today I'm happy but that's not always the case. Today my 3pm appointment was cancelled but a GP rang me straight away and got me in for 10am. The Dr. listened to everything, all my history, did an examination and I didn't feel rushed. They were a junior Dr. as well but just as good and knowledgeable as the normal GPs. She understood my symptoms and seemed to be experienced. If you feel rushed and palmed off then you don't trust them but I felt comfortable and safe. She's looking into the cause as well as helping me with treatment now, which is how it should be.</p> <p>The receptionist I spoke to was brilliant. She listened, didn't speak over me and genuinely wanted to help.</p> <p>My experience isn't always good, it depends who answers the phone or what Dr. you get. Receptionists often speak over you and don't listen. I ended up in hospital with sepsis on a drip in ICU as I hadn't been able to get an infection treated.</p>	4
228830	Got an appointment easily	<p>I rang up and got an appointment easily today, however you should be able to ring and book any time of the day and in person. Should be like before when you could book for other days.</p> <p>The website is also very slow.</p>	3

228816	The system is a nightmare	<p>It's almost impossible to see a GP. So difficult if you have a full-time job as you can't get on the phone and reception say you can't book in person. When I see a Dr. it's excellent, the quality of the personnel is good but the management is not good!</p> <p>The system to access appointments is a nightmare. I was in A&E over Christmas and they told me to see a GP if I became unwell again, but I can't get in through the system and they won't make any exceptions. I feel I'm going to have to go to hospital just to be seen.</p>	2
229146	Very hard to see a doctor	<p>Trying to see a doctor is a nightmare. They just want to talk to you on the phone. I saw one a few weeks ago but it was an enormous task. If you phone at 8 there could be 15 in the queue. The doctor was concerned about my blood pressure. I did all the tests for 6 weeks like I was asked and fed it back online in details. I then got an email saying they needed more detail. It was exasperating.</p>	1
228834	Never have appointments	<p>They never have any appointments and you can't book in person. You call up, they're full and you can't get a GP. My partner called about his finger and still hasn't been called back 2 weeks later. For my son, I was told he needed medicine but I still haven't got the prescription.</p>	1

Response from School Lane Surgery:

We at School Lane Surgery appreciate the patients taking the time to answer with Healthwatch. We're pleased to hear you have positive comments about our staff and the service we provide.

We understand, however, that some patients have expressed concerns about the new booking system. We want to acknowledge this feedback and provide some context. The new system is aligned with NHS England's "Modern General Practice" initiative, which aims to streamline access to healthcare services. We carefully considered various options, and due to the high demand on our surgery, this method offers the best solution for managing appointments at this time.

The good news is, we're actively working to increase our capacity to see more patients more quickly. We've recently welcomed a new GP in March, with another GP starting in April. We're hopeful for additional GPs joining us in the coming months. Furthermore, we've expanded our team by recruiting a Specialist Diabetic Nurse, an Advanced Care Practitioner, and a Pharmacist, all starting in May 2024.

These new staff members will further enhance our ability to serve Patients effectively.

Finally, we'd like to clarify that School Lane Pharmacy operates independently from School Lane Surgery. Any concerns regarding the pharmacy should be directed to them separately. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we navigate these changes. Your feedback is invaluable to us, and we remain committed to providing the best possible care for our patients.