

Inspection of Southchurch High School

Southchurch Boulevard, Southend-On-Sea SS2 4XA

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

The headteacher of this school is Tracy Airoll. This school is part of the Partnership Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Roger Leighton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Saadat Mubashar.

What is it like to attend this school?

Southchurch High School is an improving school. It is an increasingly positive place for pupils to learn in. Lessons are not disrupted as often as they were. Adults deal with pupils' behaviour more consistently and fairly than they did before. Pupils, on the whole, can concentrate on their studies to learn the improving curriculum.

Pupils have a growing trust that adults will sort out any of their issues or concerns, for example bullying or if others use hurtful language. As a result, pupils feel much safer in school. There are a range of adults that will help pupils should they need it. Pupils' additional needs are identified more quickly than before. The 'curriculum plus' room, for instance, supports pupils well to remain in school and focus on their studies.

Pupils access a large range of clubs, trips and experiences. Improved careers advice is beginning to open pupils' eyes to possible next steps. The relaunched house system creates a renewed sense of community and belonging.

Pupils tell us they can see the improvements to their school life. Many more parents would recommend the school than previously. While the school is no longer inadequate, there is a more work to do to improve behaviour and the curriculum further.

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

The school, supported by the trust, has taken effective action in addressing many of the significant concerns outlined in the previous inspection report. Staff, governors and the trust are unified in wanting to make the school better. Key areas of the school, like the curriculum, are improving. These changes are beginning to make a difference to the education that pupils experience. Most staff feel leaders support them well with the additional workload linked to school improvement.

The most effective areas of the curriculum outline the key knowledge pupils need to learn. In these instances, curriculum plans support teachers to know what to teach and when. Teachers' checks in class are helpful in working out what pupils understand. However, not all curriculum areas are like this. Some plans are not helpful to staff, particularly to those that teach outside of their curriculum areas or are new to the school. This is because the school's work to finalise these plans and train staff is still ongoing.

Training supports many staff to deliver lessons that help pupils to make progress. In addition, the information about pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is much better than it was in the past. As a result, lessons are increasingly adapted around what works for pupils. This is not the case everywhere. Sometimes the information in pupils' profiles and plans is not clear enough. In other instances, teachers are not adapting teaching to meet all pupils' needs. This makes it harder for pupils to learn and do their best.

The school's approach to support pupils with their reading is effective. Staff quickly spot which pupils need help in learning to read. Adults support these pupils well so that reading is not a barrier to their studies.

More staff have raised expectations in how pupils should behave. Some of the behaviour processes, however, are not always used consistently by staff. While pupils can see the positive difference in behaviour, they are frustrated about the fairness and consistency in the school's approach. A small number of pupils are still not supported well enough to change their behaviour. Suspensions have reduced but are still high. While pupils' behaviour has significantly improved around the school, it is not always good.

Pupils' attendance is improving. Persistent absence has begun to fall but still remains high. While the school is working closely with families to get pupils back into school, a number of pupils are still not attending well.

The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is improving. PSHE lessons are more regular and teach pupils about a range of important topics like consent and how to keep safe. Pupils have a growing understanding of how others are different from themselves. The reintroduced careers curriculum is supporting pupils to learn about different destinations when they leave the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A number of curriculum areas are still being improved. The curriculum plans are not finished and so are not helpful to staff in knowing what to teach and when. Assessment is not finalised or linked to the knowledge pupils must learn. This means it is harder for pupils to make progress. The school should ensure that all curriculum areas are well designed with high-quality assessment that supports pupils to make the best possible progress.
- Some information about pupils' needs is not helpful to staff. In addition, some helpful information about how to meet the needs of pupils is not always used well by staff. This means some pupils, including those with SEND, are not supported as well as they could be in the classroom. The school should ensure all information about pupils' needs is helpful to staff. The school should ensure staff have the necessary support and training to adapt lessons around this information.
- A number of staff do not use the school's behaviour systems consistently well. While pupils' behaviour is improving, a small number of pupils are not changing their behaviour. The school should evaluate its behaviour approach and ensure all staff have the training to use the school's processes consistently to support pupils to behave well.

- A small number of pupils still find it difficult to attend school regularly. They are missing out on the improved curriculum and school life. The school should reduce persistent absence by ensuring that all pupils attend school regularly.

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	143144
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10303791
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	794
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Saadat Mubashar
CEO of the trust	Roger Leighton
Headteacher	Tracy Airoll
Website	www.southchurchschool.com
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 June 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses the services of two registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of the school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with members of the trust and the local governing body, including the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors met with a range of leaders across both days of the inspection, including the interim headteacher and the school's special educational needs and disabilities coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following areas: mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, history and geography. In each area, inspectors met with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and looked at evidence of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also scrutinised other curriculum areas including English, religious education and PSHE.
- Inspectors evaluated the school's approach to support pupils with learning to read.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's behaviour systems, attendance information and records of behaviour incidents.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of pupils from different classes across both days of the inspection. Inspectors spent time with pupils in unstructured times, including breaktimes and lunchtimes, to observe behaviour and speak to pupils about school life.
- Inspectors scrutinised education, health and care plans for pupils across different classes.
- 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.
- The lead inspector considered the 129 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, including 129 free-text responses. The lead inspector also considered 105 responses to Ofsted's survey of staff.

Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Rob James	Ofsted Inspector
Diana Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector

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