

Southfield School

Gipsy Lane, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 2HR

Inspection dates

2–3 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders have not been successful in creating a culture where staff work together for the benefit of pupils. There is too little focus on the curriculum and so pupils' needs are not catered for well enough.
- Leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness are inaccurate and too generous, because they are too willing to overlook key weaknesses in the school's performance.
- The effectiveness of senior leaders is weak. Some leaders do not have the skills that are needed to bring about improvement. Staff appraisal has not ensured that staff are managed effectively. Absence in key leadership positions means that the capacity to bring about improvement is poor.
- Governors have not challenged leaders about the right issues. There has been too much focus on managing pupils' behaviour and not enough on meeting their learning needs. Governors have not responded well enough to the concerns raised by staff.
- Pupils are not safe. The school site is not secure and current systems do not adequately reduce the risk of pupils becoming seriously hurt. Leaders' plans to resolve this have been too slow to be implemented.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement. There are inconsistencies between departments in the secondary phase. Some teachers do not ensure that pupils receive the level of challenge they need to make suitable progress in their learning.
- In some lessons, pupils are insufficiently engaged because work is not challenging or interesting enough. When this is the case, their attitudes to work are poor.
- The curriculum does not meet the needs of the most challenging pupils the school serves. Recent initiatives to address this are underdeveloped and ineffective.
- Exclusions are too readily used to respond to some pupils' challenging behaviour. This means the number of exclusions is much higher than is typical and increasing.
- Pupils' outcomes require improvement because they are not making enough progress overall, and there are too many inconsistencies in the progress of different groups. Those who can access the curriculum do very well and make strong progress; however, those with complex needs do not learn as much as they should because they are not offered suitable experiences.

The school has the following strengths

- Some teaching is of high quality, for example in mathematics, food technology, art and the humanities in the secondary phase. The primary phase is very effective.
- The principal, with support from other leaders, has taken effective steps to improve attendance.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Significantly improve leadership and management so that essential improvements are made by:
 - ensuring that arrangements to safeguard pupils are robust
 - implementing rigorous and effective systems for managing staff performance so that staff are held to account for their impact on pupils' achievement
 - developing a culture where staff work together for the benefit of pupils
 - ensuring that leaders' self-evaluations are accurate and based on rigorous monitoring by leaders
 - sharpening leaders' plans for improvement so that they are more focused on the key issues for improvement
 - making rapid improvements to the curriculum so that it more consistently meets the needs of pupils
 - ensuring governors challenge leaders effectively and develop more robust systems for staff to raise concerns.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - adapting the curriculum so that it supports pupils with the most complex needs
 - ensuring staff receive up-to-date training on meeting the needs of pupils with a range of needs
 - reducing the number of exclusions.
- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good and results in good progress for all groups of pupils by:
 - raising teachers' expectations for what pupils with the most complex needs can achieve
 - tackling weaknesses in certain subjects, such as science
 - ensuring pupils' work consistently has the appropriate level of challenge, especially for the most able, and builds on what pupils already know and can do
 - developing teachers' subject knowledge, particularly those who work with pupils who have the most complex needs
 - ensuring that lessons more consistently capture the interest and enthusiasm of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leaders have not been successful in creating a culture that is safe and secure for staff and pupils. There are serious and deep divisions among the staff at the school. Leaders have not been able to address this to ensure that there is a highly effective team who work together to improve provision for the pupils. There are polar differences in the experiences of staff, some of whom are highly anxious because of the lack of effective cooperation between senior leaders and the impact this has on them.
- The school site is not secure. The school is now serving pupils with increasingly complex needs. Leaders' systems for keeping pupils safe are inadequate and cannot guarantee the safety of pupils. Actions to address these weaknesses have been too slow.
- Leaders' evaluations of the effectiveness of the school are inaccurate. They are often over-generous and do not take into account key issues that need improving at the school. This means plans for improvement are not sharply focused to bring about the rapid improvements that are needed in important areas, such as behaviour, pupils' safety and leadership and management.
- Leaders' abilities to bring about improvement have been significantly diminished by a number of factors. For example, sickness of members of the senior leadership team means that the principal is managing a number of aspects of the school's work in isolation. Furthermore, poor-quality leadership and management in key posts and the changing cohorts of pupils being admitted to the school mean that leaders who are effective are stretched too much.
- Performance management and other systems to manage staff are ineffective. Some staff who are not performing at the level that is needed remain unchallenged in post. Others do not feel adequately supported or trained to provide for the most challenging pupils effectively. Not all staff feel they can raise concerns about the school without repercussions.
- The leadership of teaching is weak. Leaders do not always accurately identify how teaching and learning can be improved when they observe teaching. Their evaluations can be over-generous and they do not take sufficient account of the different groups of pupils' progress when making their judgements.
- The curriculum does not sufficiently meet the needs of pupils who either present with the most challenging behaviour or have the highest breadth of need. The complexity of their behaviour means they are often withdrawn from lessons and so do not access the teaching that they should. This limits their progress. Recent adaptations to the curriculum to address this are underdeveloped and have not been introduced in time for some pupils. Some aspects of the curriculum are better. For example, those who can access the main curriculum benefit from well planned and delivered schemes of work. The principal understands that the curriculum needs more work to meet all pupils' needs. However, he has been unsuccessful in making the changes that are needed in the secondary department.
- Some aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted well. For example, pupils are encouraged to consider tolerance and respect and apply it to their own experiences. They are given opportunities to explore other cultures and traditions and this helps pupils reflect on life in modern Britain. The primary department delivers a curriculum with many strengths.
- Leaders have made effective use of funds that are available to them. For example, the use of the pupil premium funding has made a real difference to removing barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. Effective use is made of the sports funding available for primary pupils.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are ineffective. They have not challenged the headteacher sufficiently to bring about improvements in key areas and too readily accept the headteacher's opinion when discussing key issues at the school.
 - Governors meet regularly and visit the school to see what developments have been made to the school as a result of the plans in place for improvement. However, there is not a culture where staff feel able to raise concerns and governors have not used their visits to fully understand the issues being faced by staff. In particular, they have not paid enough attention to the concerns raised by staff about pupils' safety and welfare.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are ineffective. The school site is not secure and procedures to protect pupils who leave the school site are not well enough considered to ensure they are safe. Plans are in place to remedy this shortfall, but they have been too slow to be implemented.

- Some pupils regularly put themselves in situations where they are not safe. For example, at times of crisis, pupils are able to climb onto flat and pitched roofing and refuse to come down when encouraged to do so.
- Not all staff feel able to raise concerns with leaders, including governors. This means whistle-blowing processes are not as secure as they need to be to ensure that staff and pupils are safe. Divisions among members of staff have not been tackled well enough so not everyone is working in a way that will ensure pupils are kept safe.
- Leaders have developed more robust systems for working with families and other services. Leaders have ensured that staff know and follow procedures for raising concerns about a child. Appropriate training has been delivered, including for those who are designated to lead safeguarding. Records are kept and are thorough and reflect that the systems are well developed. However, due to illness in key positions, the principal has recently had to take more responsibility for maintaining systems so there is already a strain on the effectiveness with which they can be managed.
- The pastoral officer has implemented effective strategies for improving attendance. She works closely with the principal and both regularly visit pupils at their homes to maintain positive relationships, while attempting to improve pupils' attendance. All unexplained absences are followed up.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across the school is variable and not yet consistently good. It requires improvement because some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. This means that pupils are not sufficiently challenged to do their best and so do not learn as quickly as they could in all lessons and over time. Some teaching is much better and helps pupils to make much stronger progress.
- The teaching of the most challenging pupils at the school is too varied and does not help pupils to make the progress that they could. Leaders have rightly identified the need to ensure that the curriculum is adapted for those who struggle to access it. However, their initiatives are underdeveloped and some staff do not have the skills they need to ensure pupils make good progress.
- When expectations are higher, pupils make much better progress. For example, in a mathematics lesson in key stage 4, the teacher successfully engendered the interest and enthusiasm of pupils. He made good use of opportunities to help pupils understand the relationship between simplifying fractions and calculating the percentage of an amount. Consequently, pupils responded well to what was expected of them and were able to apply what they had been discussing to the work they were doing on their own.
- Teachers' deployment of teaching assistants and other adults is not as effective as it could be. At times, teaching assistants give pupils they are working with too much guidance and so they do not learn to apply concepts for themselves. At other times, their support is much more effective. For example, in a food technology lesson the teacher and teaching assistant worked effectively together to ensure pupils made good progress towards their individual targets.
- The teaching of English varies in quality. Where it is stronger, teachers use questioning effectively to help pupils deepen their understanding of different styles of writing and how to apply this in their own writing. However, at times, expectations in the teaching of key literacy skills are too low and pupils make limited progress.
- The teaching of mathematics is very good. Pupils learn new concepts and build on what they already know. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use assessment very effectively to ensure that lessons are targeted at what pupils need to learn.
- The teaching of reading has some strengths. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and often. Texts studied in class engage pupils and are helping to develop their love of reading. Opportunities to explore rich texts help pupils to strengthen their sense of fundamental British values and reflect on their own spiritual and moral development. For example, pupils in key stage 3 discussed the characters from the Michael Morpurgo book, *Private Peaceful*. Together with the teacher they reflected on parts of the book that engaged them emotionally and discussed the difficulties faced by the family who had a disabled child. Their studies of the story also allowed them to reflect on their place as British citizens and what it means to be a global citizen.
- Teaching in the primary department is good and sometimes better. This is because teachers ensure that the whole curriculum is exciting and motivating and meets the needs of all learners. Teachers know their pupils very well and ensure that work builds on what they already know and can do. The teaching of English and mathematics is equally strong in this part of the school. Expectations are consistently high and all staff work together exceptionally well to look after the welfare and safety of the pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Leaders support pupils' personal development and welfare sufficiently. For example, pupils' attendance has improved significantly over a number of years. This is because of the committed work undertaken by the pastoral officer and the principal. However, recent changes to the approaches taken by the school mean that a small minority of pupils still do not attend as well as they could and this needs to improve.
- Pupils often have the opportunity to take part in school sport and enjoy the opportunities they are given to compete against other schools. The food technology department at the school is a strength. In these lessons, pupils are encouraged to develop healthy attitudes towards food.
- The use of alternative provision to give pupils access to level 1 and level 2 BTEC courses has been successful. This is dovetailed with careers advice for pupils and is accessed from years 9 to 11. Pupils report positively about their experiences. Leaders work well with staff from Berkshire College of Agriculture to make the courses a success.
- Pupils report that they feel safe. They believe staff deal effectively with bullying when it occurs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Systems to promote good behaviour in lessons and over time are not effective. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are too varied and in some cases poor. Staff do not work together well enough to ensure that incidents of serious misbehaviour are reduced effectively. There are differences in the opinions of staff about how these incidents should be managed. Despite having clear systems to follow in times of crisis, some staff do not believe these systems are manageable or followed appropriately. Leaders have rightly responded to this by working to improve de-escalation skills in the staff team. However, not all staff believe they are suitably trained to tackle the most challenging behaviour.
- Pupils often use discriminatory language and this is not challenged robustly enough.
- Pupils are too readily and regularly excluded. This reflects the deficiencies of the curriculum and weaknesses in teaching. The proportion of sessions missed in the previous academic year was very high and much higher than is typical. More recently, the need for exclusion has increased and there has been a permanent exclusion. Too often leaders focus too much on behaviour and not enough on how the curriculum could be developed to reduce serious incidents. They have also been slow to recognise that more could be done to improve the school site to reduce opportunities for pupils to put themselves in unsafe situations.

Outcomes for pupils require improvement

- Overall, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable from their different starting points. Those who present with the most challenging behaviour are not able to access the curriculum on offer in the secondary department. This means their opportunities to make progress are sometimes limited. For those who do access the curriculum, inconsistencies remain because teaching is too variable, particularly in science, and not enough is expected of pupils.
- Due to the severity of the needs of the pupils, their attainment is generally below average. The progress pupils make from their starting points varies too much. Where teaching is stronger, pupils generally make better progress and where expectations are lower, they do not do as well. Work in pupils' books shows that those who attend lessons regularly make strong gains in their numeracy and literacy skills. Pupils are given useful opportunities to apply their skills in writing across other parts of the curriculum.
- Those pupils who have special educational needs or disability underachieve. The provision offered does not do enough to meet their specific needs because those who have been admitted, for example, with autistic spectrum conditions, have needs the school is not set up to meet.
- The most-able pupils do not do as well as they could. Sufficiently challenging work for these pupils is not evident in lessons, so they do not have the opportunity to reach their potential. Far too few attain the higher grades if they take GCSE examinations.
- The achievement of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is improving and the gap between their attainment and that of their peers is closing. This is because leaders have made good use of the funding to reduce barriers to learning for pupils who are disadvantaged.

- Pupils who successfully access the school's curriculum leave the school well prepared for the next stage of education, employment or training. This is because they are supported effectively to gain the qualifications needed to secure college placements by the time they leave the school. In 2014 and 2015, all pupils went on to further studies in a local college placement.

School details

Unique reference number	110191
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	10017581

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained special
Age range of pupils	9–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Helen Marengo
Principal	Mr Dominic Geraghty
Telephone number	01189 771 293
Website	www.southfield.wokingham.sch.uk
Email address	admin@southfield.wokingham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 May 2013

Information about this school

- Southfield School is a special school for pupils with social, emotional or mental health needs. The school has been working with the local authority to admit and cater for pupils with an increasing level of need. Since the last inspection, the residential provision has been closed and there are no current plans to reopen it.
- The school makes use of alternative provision for pupils in years 10 and 11. This provision is delivered at Berkshire College of Agriculture.
- The majority of the pupils are White British and, although designated a mixed school, there are no girls on the school roll at the moment.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium, which is government funding provided for children who are looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above national average.
- All pupils attending Southfield School have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

Information about this inspection

- Her Majesty's Inspector observed 13 lessons or parts of lessons across all key stages, all jointly with senior leaders from the school. He observed behaviour at a number of different times in the school day.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, representatives from the local authority and several members of staff, and the chair of the governing body was spoken to on the telephone.
- Her Majesty's Inspector looked closely at school documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings, leaders' analysis of how well the school is doing, the improvement plan and data and tracking information about pupils' achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- There were only three responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2016

