

Inspection of Southway

Middleton Road, Belle Isle, Leeds, West Yorkshire, West Yorkshire LS10 3JA

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are referred to Southway because they lost their way in mainstream education. Some had been permanently excluded. Others were at risk of being so. Many had not attended school for months. Southway offers them something different and the chance to make a fresh start. The staff give pupils hope. They are constantly positive and encouraging. They instil renewed belief in many pupils.

Positive relationships are at the heart of Southway's approach. The 'can-do' attitude of the staff gets most pupils back into the classroom and learning. Many pupils improve their attendance and their attitude. Some pupils get back on track and return to their mainstream school. Those who stay at Southway get good support to take their next step into training or employment. Older pupils know what qualifications they need. They begin to apply themselves more as their confidence grows.

Pupils learn that the staff are there for them. This helps most to improve their behaviour. They become increasingly respectful of others. There are tight systems to supervise and check on pupils. This prevents any bullying. Pupils benefit from sporting activities, such as the Tuesday boxing club. Many enjoy learning new skills through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme.

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

The principal and other leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. Since the last inspection, they have tightened behaviour management expectations. For example, pupils are routinely searched when they enter the school. Risk assessments are now more comprehensive and detailed. The principal models his expectations clearly. The staff are on board and follow his example.

Leaders have also raised academic expectations. Staff training opportunities have improved teachers' curriculum planning and subject knowledge. Schemes of work are now consistent in quality across subjects and key stages. The knowledge to be taught has been sequenced carefully. Teachers select the topics they teach based on the findings from assessments that pupils take when they join the school. In mathematics, English and science, teachers set work in line with national curriculum expectations. Pupils in key stage 4 follow GCSE courses and meaningful qualifications in option subjects. Effective staff training means lessons are thoughtfully structured. Teachers explain topics well. They use 'throw-back Thursdays' and 'flashback Fridays' to check what pupils can remember. Consequently, pupils remember much of what they are taught.

Leaders have invested in better resources to support pupils' reading. More interesting books have been purchased. Pupils are following a reading programme supported by Leeds United Football Club. This inspection found the weakest readers

in the school were being supported effectively. For example, pupils' fluency and comprehension were being developed by reading different parts from the play *Our Day Out*. However, leaders acknowledge that the rapid turnover of pupils means they are likely to receive pupils who cannot decode words properly. Currently, staff are not trained to provide phonics assessments and do not have appropriate books to support the systematic teaching of phonics.

Most pupils attend Southway because they have struggled to manage their own behaviour in mainstream schools. Southway is different. The staff are adept at gaining pupils' trust. Their patience and unstinting encouragement foster pupils' loyalty. Most pupils repay this through their improved behaviour and attitude. Pupils told inspectors that the school had given them another chance. Pupils typically attend five lessons a day. Most learn to manage their behaviour. Some do disrupt lessons occasionally. Most staff manage behaviour well, although some are not sure when to challenge disruptive behaviour. Many pupils significantly improve their attendance when they join Southway. However, others who lost touch with schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic remain hard to reach and miss too much school. These pupils are particularly vulnerable.

There is good provision in place for pupils' personal development. Pupils are taught a 'resilience' curriculum that includes meaningful topics about relationships, consent, pregnancy, race and social manners. Leaders have ensured that statutory learning about relationships and sex is covered at key stage 3 and key stage 4. The safer schools officer provides sessions covering topics about law enforcement, civic responsibility and personal safety. There is a boxing club, table tennis and opportunities to plant trees. A strength of the school's work is the development of pupils' character. Many pupils join the school feeling they have failed. However, their improved attitudes and good careers guidance means most achieve qualifications and take up apprenticeships or places in further education or training.

The principal and other leaders have improved the school. They are passionate about improving pupils' life chances. Where possible, they get pupils back to their mainstream schools. Pupils complete their courses. In recent years, they have ensured that every pupil who completes key stage 4 has found a place in education, employment or training. Leaders take account of the pressures on staff. There is a strong team ethic throughout the school.

Leaders have ensured that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equalities Act 2010.

The proprietor has strengthened governance with the appointment of a third director. More appointments are planned. Directors visit the school often and provide effective scrutiny, keeping the trust informed of developments. The trust has provided good financial support in order to appoint staff and provide suitable training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The staff are recruited carefully. Rigorous checks are made on their suitability and their willingness to work in a challenging setting. Staff are carefully inducted and receive a high level of safeguarding training before they start to work with pupils. The staff are vigilant and are able to identify risks to pupils because they have their trust. The school has its own multi-agency team and employs a safer schools police officer. Together, they bring a wealth of intelligence about the pupils and their backgrounds. The school makes regular safeguarding checks for pupils who are the hardest to reach. These pupils are visited at their homes every day, if deemed necessary.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Many pupils placed in the school have a background of very low or no attendance at their mainstream school. There is evidence that for many pupils, their attendance improves and that they re-engage with learning at Southway. However, some pupils placed at the school remain hard to reach and stubbornly do not attend school enough. This leaves them vulnerable and at risk of not finding a place in education, employment or training. The school needs to further develop its capacity to reach these pupils and change their minds, so that they re-engage with education.
- The school is likely to receive some pupils who have considerable gaps in their reading skills and are not phonetically secure. Currently, the school does not have staff trained to teach phonics or appropriate decodable books to support pupils in the earlier stages of reading. Leaders should provide the necessary training and resources so that the weakest readers can be helped to secure their phonics knowledge.
- Disruptive or distracting behaviour occasionally occurs in lessons. Leaders should support members of staff who are less confident to manage low-level disruption effectively. This would help to improve the learning experience for all.

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	146633
DfE registration number	383/6009
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	10202224
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	91
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Rodillian Multi-Academy Trust
Chair	Janice Bennett
Principal	Andy Percival
Annual fees	£22,155
Telephone number	01133 367772
Website	www.southway.org.uk
Email address	apercival@southway.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 to 7 November 2019

Information about this school

- The previous standard inspection of the school took place in November 2019. An additional monitoring inspection took place in February 2021.
- The current principal took up post in November 2020.
- The school admits pupils who are referred by local authorities or schools. All pupils attending Southway are dual registered with the school they originally attended and with Southway.
- All pupils at Southway have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A small proportion have education, health and care plans.
- The school has an off-site unit at The Featherstone Academy, called New Way. The address for this provision is The Featherstone Academy, Pontefract Road, Featherstone, Pontefract WF7 5AJ. This site is not currently in use.
- The school is part of the Rodillian Multi-Academy Trust. The trust has appointed three directors who provide governance oversight and report to a trust committee.
- The school does not use any alternative education providers.

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.
- Inspectors met the principal, vice-principal, the chief executive of the Rodillian Multi-Academy Trust and the trust's HR lead. Inspectors also met one of the school's directors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, English, science and music. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors toured the school site to check whether the premises met the requirements of the independent school standards.
- Inspectors checked the quality of the school's systems for vetting adults who work in or visit the school. Inspectors also met with the school's safeguarding

leaders and spoke to staff to explore their understanding of their role in safeguarding pupils.

- Inspectors looked at the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the responses to the staff's and pupils' questionnaires.

Inspection team

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