

Inspection of Southchurch High School

Southchurch Boulevard, Southend-On-Sea SS2 4XA

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not always feel happy and safe. Staff want to help and do the best for pupils, but some pupils feel unable to speak out when they experience bullying or prejudice. This is because pupils feel it will keep happening. Some older pupils worry about how their younger siblings will be supported once they leave the school.

Pupils get an inconsistent experience in lessons and around the school. This is because some staff have low expectations of how pupils should behave and what they should learn. This prevents pupils from learning well in some subjects. Behaviour outside lessons is not good enough and pupils do not always feel safe when staff are not there to supervise. Pupils feel that some staff take a confrontational approach to dealing with behaviour, and this causes pupils to react badly.

The school does not cater well for the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), as it does not take enough account of parents' views. Support for pupils with SEND is not targeted enough at pupils' individual needs.

Pupils value the range of extra-curricular clubs on offer which provide them with a broad range of experiences. However, pupils are not well prepared for life in modern Britain, as some lack tolerance and respect for others.

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

In some subjects, the planned curriculum is not taught well. Pupils do not learn and remember as much as they should. For example, in mathematics, pupils struggle with currency conversions as they have not secured the necessary prior skill of being able to multiply. Crucial knowledge is missing, which impacts on pupils being able to achieve success when using more-complex skills.

Achievement is particularly low for pupils with SEND. This is because expectations for them are too low, and their needs are not accurately identified. Staff have not been trained well enough to ensure they support pupils with SEND effectively. The information that teachers are given about the needs of pupils lacks sufficient detail and guidance, such as the specific strategies which will help pupils. Therefore, it does not help staff to meet pupils' needs well enough. Provision for pupils with SEND is not appropriately reviewed to check it is supporting pupils with SEND to effectively access the curriculum.

The use of assessment is too variable. In some subjects, teachers do not use assessment well to check what pupils have learned and understand. For instance, GCSE assessments are sometimes used in key stage 3. Pupils have not consolidated the depth of understanding they need in key stage 3 for these assessments to be useful.

Leaders promote the subjects which make up the English Baccalaureate well and take-up of these subjects is high. Most subjects have a well planned and thought

through curriculum. Students develop fluency in reading through well-chosen and appropriate texts. This is mainly as part of the English curriculum.

Poor behaviour has a negative impact on what pupils learn. Teachers apply the behaviour policy inconsistently. As a result, pupils feel that this disruption inhibits their learning in the lessons where the policy is not followed. Pupils in key stage 4 want some teachers to establish what they call 'mutually respectful relationships', by not shouting, and applying the policy calmly and consistently.

In Year 11, pupils are being inappropriately separated by sex in some subjects. Leaders made this decision without consulting pupils. They chose to do so because they determined boys' behaviour was worse than that of girls. Although the school's intention was to improve achievement, the impact was to take away choice from pupils by grouping them by sex rather than need. While a very small number of pupils have moved to a group made up of a sex other than their own, there is no realistic choice for most to do so. The culture of the school is such that they may be worried about how other pupils would treat them should they opt to do so.

Pupils do not always feel safe in school. Some students and parents feel there are regular instances of bullying. Some Year 11 girls talked about boys shouting down their opinions or limiting discussion around issues such as feminism. Although the school has a well-planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme, this is not having a positive enough impact. Some pupils do not treat each other with mutual respect.

Support in preparing pupils for their future careers is a strength as pupils get regular support and guidance to help them make well-informed choices. The school is meeting the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Leaders, including those from the trust, were not aware of the extent of the issues within the school. Leaders do not currently have effective plans in place to address these issues.

Leaders are mindful of supporting staff with their workload and well-being. They have reduced some of the administrative burden relating to data entry as a result.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding team, led by the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), has ensured appropriate training is in place for staff. The team has built a culture of identifying pupils for early help and being persistent at securing this help.

The school's online system provides a detailed chronology and follow-up actions. The single central record is fit for purpose. Staff, including governors, are trained in how to recruit staff safely. Students said that they could report safeguarding concerns to a trusted adult if needed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The SEND code of practice is not being implemented, including the 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review' cycle. Therefore, provision for pupils with SEND is not effectively meeting need as it is not well identified. Leaders should ensure the SEND code of practice, including the 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review' cycle, is fully implemented and that parents are fully consulted as part of this process.
- Leaders inappropriately separate pupils by sex in some lessons. Because this decision was taken without consultation, and because it assumes that boys as a group behave less well, this is detrimental to the equality for pupils. For example, it would be reasonable for a boy to feel treated less well by being put in a group whose behaviour is seen to be worse simply because of his sex. Leaders should ensure all pupils are treated equally, regardless of their sex.
- In some subjects, pupils lack the prior knowledge they need to access more-complex learning. As a result, some pupils are unable to engage with learning in lessons and are unsure about what to do. Leaders need to ensure teachers in all subjects make effective use of assessment to establish what knowledge and skills pupils have secured. Teachers need to make sure pupils have secured this prior knowledge before introducing new learning that builds on it.
- Some pupils have serious concerns about bullying, harassment and discrimination and feel that it happens on a regular basis. Some do not feel confident to speak out as they feel it will just keep happening, so are quietly accepting of it. Leaders need to establish a culture where pupils understand why this is wrong, feel confident to speak out and treat each other with respect.
- Behaviour is dealt with inconsistently across the school. Pupils feel that the behaviour of some makes it hard for them to learn. Others feel that they react badly because some teachers shout at them. Leaders need to secure a climate of good behaviour and mutual respect across the school, where disruption to learning is not tolerated.
- Trustees and governors have not held leaders to account effectively enough or ensured that appropriate training and support for staff are in place. As a result, pupils are not getting a good quality of education. Trustees must ensure that leaders have accurate and robust plans in place to rapidly address areas of weakness within the school. Trustees need to assure themselves that these plans for improvement are having the necessary impact. Systems and processes need to be in place across the school to secure accountability and provide appropriate support and training for staff to secure a good quality of education for pupils.

Having considered the evidence, I strongly recommend that leaders and those responsible for governance do not seek to appoint early career teachers.

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

Unique reference number	143144
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10212345
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	818
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Saadat Mubashar
Headteacher	Stuart Reynolds
Website	www.southchurchschool.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Partnership Learning Trust.
- Southchurch High School converted to become an academy school in July 2018. When its predecessor school, Futures Community College, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be 'requires improvement' overall.
- The school uses one alternative provider.
- The school operates a practice of separation by sex in Year 11 for both mathematics and English lessons. The practice amounts to unfavourable treatment and causes the following detriment to pupils: denying pupils choice by grouping together by sex rather than individual need or preference. The unfavourable treatment identified is due to the sex of the pupils. The practice constitutes indirect discrimination contrary to the Equality Act 2010.
- The school's rationale for the policy is that it is a temporary measure to improve achievement since the school fully reopened, following the previous COVID-19 restrictions. This is not a reasonable belief that positive action is required under section 158 of the Equality Act 2010. The school has not shown that there was no other less discriminatory measure that could achieve this aim. The practice of

separation is kept under periodic review. The positive action exemption does not apply to the separation policy.

- The school has given assurances that it is going to change the practice of separation.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44 of 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, and physical education. 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 met with school leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, governors and representatives from the trust.
- Inspectors explored the school's safeguarding culture through viewing safeguarding records and procedures, meeting with a range of pupils and staff and talking to safeguarding leaders.
- Inspectors considered the 45 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 33 parental free-text responses. Inspectors also considered three emails sent by parents to Ofsted during the inspection. There were no responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire, and no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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