

Inspection of Ortu Gable Hall School

Southend Road, Corringham, Stanford-le-Hope, Essex SS17 8JT

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils report that behaviour is much better than it once was and that they feel safe. However, leaders' actions and work to establish an effective safeguarding culture have not ensured that the most vulnerable pupils are not open to risk.

Relationships between pupils and adults are positive. Pupils know who to go to when bullying occurs. They say that teachers deal with issues quickly to prevent repeat occurrences. Staff now have a consistent approach to discipline.

Pupils are proud of the contributions they make in school and to the local community. For example, they enjoy fundraising and undertaking voluntary work. During the inspection, many pupils wore their cadet uniforms with pride, taking part in programmes to develop their leadership. Sixth-form students delight in helping in the younger classes.

Pupils learn a range of subjects, including a wide vocational offer. However, the curriculum also has limitations. For example, pupils cannot study computing, which limits pupils' ability to pursue a career in the engineering and technical fields. Provision for religious education (RE) is weak in Years 10 and 11. Unlike their peers, some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in Years 7 to 9 cannot study a modern foreign language.

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

Leaders, including governors and trustees, have an overgenerous view of the quality of the school's provision. While they have asked questions of leaders, governors and trustees have not challenged leaders' strategic decisions in relation to the curriculum and its lack of ambition. Nor have they assured themselves accurately about the effectiveness of the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils.

Many subject leaders have carefully considered what pupils should learn and when. Leaders ensure that pupils revisit key ideas, so that pupils recall what they learn. A few subject leaders are still working through the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In science, staff are strengthening practical investigation and in modern foreign languages, teachers are providing more speaking opportunities. Teachers typically have good subject knowledge. Staff have opportunities to learn from the latest educational research. Most pupils enjoy learning.

Students in the sixth form value their study time and read widely around their subjects. The strong reading habits in the older years are not replicated in the younger years. While there are planned opportunities to read during the school day, younger pupils do not enjoy reading. Staff do not prioritise, teach and motivate pupils to recognise the importance of reading for future study.

Pupils who are still learning to read follow a systematic phonics programme, which quickly helps them gain the knowledge and skills they need. Pupils read texts that

match their ability. This means they experience success early on and this motivates them to read more. Leaders are working with pupils so that once they can read, they keep doing so.

Leaders are addressing weaknesses effectively in the provision for pupils with SEND. Leaders have undertaken training to ensure that pupils' needs are accurately assessed and identified. They have overhauled pupils' support plans and include staff in the reviewing of these. Staff are receiving ongoing training to understand how best to cater for pupils' needs in the classroom. They provide well for sixth-form students with SEND.

Behaviour, including that of pupils with complex behavioural needs, is improving. The new behaviour policy is being consistently applied by staff. The rate of suspensions has drastically reduced and harder-to-reach pupils are attending more regularly. Where there are a few pockets of low-level disruption, leaders are supporting relevant staff.

The implementation of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum and that for relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education is not effective in the main school. There is not enough curriculum time given to the teaching of these subjects. Pupils report a 'bitty' experience which affects their understanding of key concepts. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not have planned religious education (RE) teaching unless they opt for it as a qualification. This limits pupils' knowledge and understanding of a multi-faith Britain.

Personal development is stronger in the sixth form. Students follow a comprehensive tutor programme which focuses on preparation for adulthood. A range of effective support is in place to help students make choices about their future careers or study. Sixth-form students speak appreciatively of the opportunities for work experience. Students successfully secure their next steps in employment, education and training.

Careers provision is well led. Leaders use the Gatsby benchmarks to check the effectiveness of the school's careers programme. Pupils and sixth-form students have access to dedicated careers advisers. During the pandemic, they continued to access virtual employer talks.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders have not consistently followed statutory guidance in relation to referring to the local authority designated officer when there is a staff allegation. They have not followed government guidance for incidents of peer-on-peer abuse or sexual violence and harassment. Leaders do not routinely check on the welfare of pupils who have been subject to harm. Sometimes, they do not provide support and challenge to those who have abused others. Furthermore, safeguarding records have gaps. Staff do not consistently record incidents, actions that have been taken or if any follow-up action by staff has occurred.

Leaders have not checked sufficiently well on staff's understanding of the safeguarding training they receive. Some leaders and staff do not have an up-to-date knowledge of the 'Prevent' duty or what to do if there is a staff allegation.

Pupils know the risks that they face, such as knife crime. They receive helpful inputs from visiting external agencies.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not secured a robust safeguarding culture. Leaders and staff are not consistently following statutory guidance to protect the most vulnerable pupils. Leaders have not routinely checked on the welfare and well-being of the most vulnerable pupils or put in place appropriate support. Some staff do not have up-to-date knowledge of their safeguarding duties. Trust leaders need to urgently run further safeguarding training, so that all staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities for the safeguarding of children and follow clear and robust procedures.
- Safeguarding records are not well maintained. There are gaps in recording, some communication from external agencies is kept in multiple places, and staff are not always noting communications and follow-up actions with pupils. This means that leaders do not have a full picture of safeguarding cases where pupils are vulnerable. Leaders and governors must urgently review and improve arrangements for the noting and recording of pupils' welfare and safety.
- Pupils are not learning what they are entitled to learn in the subjects of computing, modern foreign languages and RE. This is limiting pupils' knowledge and understanding, which subsequently affects their future options. Leaders need to review the breadth and ambition of the curriculum so that it is equal to, or better than the national curriculum.
- The development of a reading culture is in its infancy. Some pupils do not value the importance of reading and choose not to read. Leaders have recently introduced a range of strategies to improve this. Leaders should review what is working well and what is not so that further improvements can be made and pupils read well.
- Current arrangements for the delivery of PSHE and RSE and health education are not working well. This is affecting pupils' ability to recall their learning in these areas. Leaders need to press ahead with intended changes so that teachers can teach the curriculum content in depth and pupils learn well.

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	136854
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10212266
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1390
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	199
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Steve Nash
Principal	Ceri Evans
Website	www.ortugablehall.org
Date of previous inspection	22 and 23 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The principal was appointed in September 2018. Several senior leaders are new to their roles.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets 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.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- 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 spoke with the chief executive officer of the trust, members of the local governing body and local authority representatives. Inspectors also spoke to the principal, senior leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, performing arts, history and modern foreign languages to evaluate the quality of 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 considered the provision for PSHE, RSE and health education and RE. Inspectors reviewed curriculum plans, visited lessons and spoke with pupils and leaders.
- Inspectors met with the leaders in charge of SEND and scrutinised documentation. Inspectors observed support for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's information on behaviour, bullying and attendance. Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records and spoke with the chief executive officer of the trust, members of the local governing body, local authority representatives, leaders, staff and pupils about safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors considered the 87 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 86 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the 75 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 151 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Diana Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector
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