

Inspection of South Derbyshire Support Centre

Memorial Hall, Main Street, Newhall, Swadlincote, Derbyshire DE11 0TW

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 January 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who attend South Derbyshire have not always had the best start to their education or to their school careers. However, this school provides them with another chance and the opportunity to gain appropriate GCSE qualifications. Staff also improve pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. This work helps to prepare pupils well for their return to mainstream education.

Pupils say that they are happy and safe here. They like the structure, stability and the routines. Staff are skilled in taking the time to get to know the pupils and to understand their individual needs. Pupils appreciate this sensitive and caring approach.

Staff expect pupils to attend frequently, work hard and behave well. Overall, they do. Pupils' attendance and behaviour improve when compared to their previous school or setting. Any rare instances of bullying are dealt with swiftly and fairly. There are chances for pupils to visit the local amenities and places of interest. Specialist visitors help to educate pupils on, for example, the dangers of knife crime and gang culture.

Parents and carers tend to hold positive views. One typical comment was, 'The teachers have nurtured and helped my child learn to self-regulate and gain social and emotional skills. They are now ready to return to mainstream [education].'

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

Leaders have constructed an ambitious curriculum. It is well-designed and well thought through. Pupils are taught key knowledge and skills in English, mathematics and science. This work is underpinned by other programmes, such as the Focussed programme. Here, pupils are often given breakfast and the chance to talk about any worries or share good news. They are given opportunities to revisit some of their previous work. This helps them to remember what they have been taught. During other programmes, pupils develop their resilience and improve their social and emotional skills. This work is preparing pupils well for their return to mainstream education or for their next steps.

Staff find out what pupils know and can remember in several ways. Comprehensive assessments are undertaken before pupils start. These help staff to identify any gaps in knowledge and any extra social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Frequent assessments are undertaken. Sometimes, they are quick quizzes and tests. These allow staff to understand the knowledge pupils have learned. Staff adapt their lessons to help fill any identified gaps.

Leaders use a consistent approach to teach pupils how to read. Staff have received appropriate training. This helps to ensure that pupils' reading books match the sounds that they are learning. Staff are trying to foster a love of reading. Pupils are

encouraged to read comics and other books of personal interest. This is helping pupils to become more confident and fluent readers.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to school. The vast majority of pupils attend frequently and are punctual. Staff manage pupils' challenging behaviour very well. Leaders have introduced a consistent behaviour rewards and sanctions system. However, sometimes staff do not always use this approach consistently. As one pupil said, 'It just depends on who we have.'

Pupils' personal development is well catered for. Pupils learn different skills in, for example, fitness, art and music. There are opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge of enterprise. They help to organise and run Christmas and summer fairs and repair bikes to be sold within the local community. Pupils receive age-appropriate sex and relationships education. Staff provide strong careers advice and guidance. All Year 11 pupils last year moved on to appropriate education or training.

The trust has made a positive difference to this school. The building and facilities are much improved. Many staff say that they are proud to work here. They say that leaders are appreciative of their well-being and their workload.

The relatively new governing body have made a solid start. However, they are too reliant on the headteacher for information. They should find out for themselves what is happening. They will then be able to hold leaders fully to account for their actions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff have received effective safeguarding training. They are vigilant for the signs of potential neglect and abuse. They are aware of issues such as county lines drug trafficking, the 'Prevent' duty and the dangers of knife crime. Leaders keep detailed safeguarding records. Outside agencies such as the police and social care are contacted promptly should the need arise.

The single central record meets requirements.

Pupils learn about fire safety, health and hygiene and how to be safe when online. They know about the dangers of drugs and alcohol misuse.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have a well-thought-through behaviour policy. However, not all staff always follow it. Rewards and sanctions are not consistently applied. Consequently, pupils are sometimes unsure about what they can and cannot do. Leaders should ensure that all staff consistently implement the school's behaviour

policy so that rewards and sanctions are applied fairly and appropriately during the day.

- The governing body have made a good start in ensuring that their statutory duties are met. They are at the very early stages of finding out for themselves how well the school is doing. However, they are too reliant on the headteacher for this information. The governing body should introduce a comprehensive programme that enables them to gather information at first-hand and therefore hold leaders fully to account for their actions.

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](#)' 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	146056
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10240410
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	David Symons
Headteacher	Gareth Allen (executive headteacher)
Website	www.sdsc.derbyshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- South Derbyshire Support Centre converted to become an academy in August 2018. When its predecessor school, also known as South Derbyshire Support Centre, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The executive headteacher and head of school took up their roles in February 2021 and September 2022, respectively.
- Pupils attending the school are either at risk of permanent exclusion or have been permanently excluded from their mainstream school.
- Pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as SEMH and behavioural needs.
- A small number of pupils have education, health and care plans.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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 held various meetings with the executive headteacher, head of school, school leaders and other staff. The lead inspector met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and the chair and chief executive officer of the ESTEEM trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and mathematics. The lead inspector scrutinised the various supplementary programmes designed to develop pupils' SEMH needs. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum plans and spoke with the leader for science. The lead inspector listened to pupils from key stage 2 read.
- Inspectors met with pupils to understand their views of the school. Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons and social times.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector checked the single central record. Inspectors checked staff's knowledge of the school's safeguarding procedures. Safeguarding records were scrutinised.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Peter Stonier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ben Waldram

Ofsted Inspector

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