

Inspection of South Shore Academy

St Anne's Road, Blackpool, Lancashire FY4 2AR

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff do not have high enough expectations for pupils at South Shore Academy. Leaders do not ensure that all pupils attend school regularly or benefit from an appropriately broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum.

Many pupils do not receive an acceptable standard of education. They are poorly prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training. This is partly because many staff are not suitably equipped to ensure that pupils learn effectively in the subjects that they study.

Many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are unhappy about the education that they receive. Their needs are not adequately met, and they do not receive the support that they need to ensure that they learn well.

Pupils' learning in lessons is not usually disrupted by poor behaviour. Conversely, pupils regularly experience a wide range of anti-social behaviours around the school grounds and during social times. This includes the use of abusive language, bullying and physical aggression. Some pupils do not have confidence in how some staff deal with such issues. This spoils pupils' enjoyment of school.

Pupils are well educated about how to stay safe. Staff ensure that safeguarding procedures are effective. Pupils are appreciative of what staff do to support this aspect of their welfare and to help them to feel safe.

Some pupils take part in activities that enhance their personal development. For example, some pupils take full advantage of the range of additional opportunities on offer, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. However, the participation of many pupils in enrichment activities is often not sustained.

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

Leaders, including members of the local governing body (LGB) and trust leaders, have failed to tackle the weaknesses in the quality of education and pupils' attendance. Consequently, pupils' achievement is weak. They are ill-prepared for their next steps when they leave Year 11.

Senior and subject leaders have been too slow to enact their vision of the education that pupils deserve. Members of the LGB have failed to adequately challenge and support leaders' actions or the pace of improvement. The trust has not acted quickly enough to provide support and additional leadership capacity.

Leaders do not ensure that pupils benefit from a suitably ambitious curriculum. The vast majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not choose to study a broad and balanced range of subjects. Too many pupils do not complete GCSE courses in

English, mathematics or science. This includes the very large number of pupils who attend alternative provision and some pupils with SEND.

Leaders have not ensured that subject curriculums are fit for purpose. Subject content is often poorly ordered. In some subjects, different classes across the same age group do not learn the same subject matter. This is because leaders do not consider the knowledge that pupils should learn carefully enough. This impedes teachers' understanding of what subject content they should deliver. It also hampers teachers from checking that pupils have learned all that they should.

Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise vary greatly. In places, they are extremely weak. This affects how well many teachers introduce and explain subject content in lessons. Furthermore, many teachers do not have consistently high aspirations for pupils. Often, the work that pupils are given does not enable them to gain the knowledge that they need for future success.

Leaders have ensured that the systems to identify the needs of pupils with SEND have been strengthened. However, teachers' ability to use the information that they receive about pupils' individual needs is typically underdeveloped. Teachers do not adequately consider the barriers that pupils with SEND may face when learning. This means pupils do not receive the support that they need or the help that is provided is not effective. Commonly, these pupils experience a poor-quality education.

Leaders identify gaps in pupils' reading knowledge. Suitably trained staff provide relevant additional support for pupils who find reading difficult. However, the effectiveness of this support is mixed. As a result, while some pupils make gains in their reading knowledge, others do not. This means that many pupils cannot read or write sufficiently well for their age. This hinders their access to the curriculum and impedes their academic success even further. Furthermore, teachers' strategies to support pupils' reading in lessons are often ineffective. This is because many teachers do not have the expertise or knowledge to help pupils overcome gaps in their reading knowledge.

A large number of pupils receive some or all of their education from alternative providers. While leaders have established better oversight of pupils' safety when attending these settings, they do not ensure that these pupils receive a broad and ambitious curriculum.

Pupils' attendance is extremely poor and getting worse. Absence rates have increased markedly this year. Leaders' actions have failed to address this long-standing endemic weakness.

Despite a number of attempts, leaders have not been able to establish an appropriate culture of positive behaviour. The behaviour of many pupils around the school is unacceptable. These pupils direct inappropriate and abusive language at each other and staff. They subject other pupils to derogatory and discriminatory insults. Often, these actions are sustained in the form of persistent bullying. Sometimes, pupils intimidate others with physical aggression. Leaders' and staff's

efforts to tackle these incidents successfully in the last year have had too little impact.

The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programmes cover an appropriate range of social, moral, spiritual and cultural themes. Overall, these programmes cover enough ground to ensure that pupils learn important information that helps them to be ready for modern British society. However, the impact of these programmes is variable. This is because teachers are not sufficiently well equipped to deliver these programmes well. In addition, the provision to help pupils make decisions about their future is not good enough. Careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) opportunities are not deliberately designed to build on pupils' prior experiences. Consequently, pupils do not know and remember all that they should in preparation for their life and choices beyond school.

Staff are positive about the pastoral support that leaders provide. They appreciate what leaders do to listen to them and to support their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Despite the unacceptable behaviour from some pupils in the school, which leaves others feeling anxious and worried, leaders do have effective systems in place to keep pupils safe.

Leaders have a good understanding of the risks to safety that pupils may face. They take appropriate account of risks that are specific to the local area. They ensure that pupils are taught about safety and what they can do to keep themselves safe.

Leaders provide appropriate training to ensure that staff are well equipped to keep pupils safe. Staff make effective use of suitable systems to report concerns about pupils.

Leaders carefully act on staff's concerns. They ensure that pupils who need it are supported by school staff or external partners if appropriate.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not ensure that pupils, including those with SEND, access a sufficiently broad and ambitious curriculum. The vast majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 study a narrow range of subjects. This means that most pupils are not adequately prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training. Leaders should ensure that all pupils benefit from a curriculum that helps them to achieve well and be successful in their next steps.

- Subject curriculums are often weak. Leaders have not considered the knowledge that pupils should learn carefully enough. As a result, the quality with which teachers deliver the curriculum and assess pupils' progress is too variable. It is typically weak. Leaders should ensure that subject curriculums set out and order the important knowledge that pupils should learn.
- Some teachers do not have the expertise or subject knowledge that they need to deliver the subjects that they teach. This affects how well teachers select, introduce and explain subject matter. This means that pupils do not gain a secure body of knowledge in the subjects that they study. Leaders should ensure that all teachers have the knowledge and skills that they need to deliver the curriculum effectively in the subjects they teach.
- Teachers do not understand how to provide effective support for pupils with SEND. Consequently, these pupils do not benefit from a good-quality education. Their achievement is weak. Leaders must ensure that teachers have the knowledge and skills that they need to provide effective support so that pupils with SEND succeed.
- The effectiveness of the support that pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read receive is mixed. This means that many pupils cannot read or write sufficiently well for their age. This barrier stops them from accessing the curriculum and makes it even more difficult for them to experience academic success. Leaders should ensure that staff know how to support pupils to overcome gaps in their reading knowledge.
- Absence rates are extremely high and rising. This means that the majority of pupils miss out on their education and the provision to support their personal development. Leaders must ensure that they better understand the factors affecting pupils' high rates of absence and then take action to tackle the unacceptable levels of school attendance.
- Leaders are not taking effective steps to secure good behaviour from pupils. The behaviour of a considerable number of pupils around school is poor and causes other pupils to feel unhappy and anxious. Staff do not tackle such poor incidents of behaviour well enough. As a matter of urgency, leaders must tackle the poor behaviour that has become the norm in the school. They should ensure that staff are suitably equipped to tackle unacceptable behaviour so that pupils can come to school unworried and enjoy their experiences.
- The delivery of the PSHE programmes is uneven across year groups and classes. Similarly, the support for CEIAG is not good enough. As a result, pupils do not gain a broad and secure understanding of all that they should in readiness for the next stages in their lives. Leaders should ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise to deliver the PSHE programmes consistently well. Leaders should also revise the provision for CEIAG so that pupils are fully prepared for their future.
- Leaders, including members of the local governing body, do not demonstrate the capacity to tackle the long-standing weaknesses at South Shore Academy. As a result, they have overseen a further decline in pupils' attendance, behaviour and the quality of education that pupils receive. Leaders, including trust leaders, must

address the weaknesses in leadership and governance to ensure that pupils enjoy their experience at school and achieve well.

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.

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	140021
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10268340
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	771
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Daniel Rubin
Head of School	Rebecca Warhurst
Website	http://southshoreacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- South Shore Academy is part of The Bright Futures Educational Trust.
- Leaders make use of 10 registered alternative providers to provide full- and part-time education for 53 pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislations, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 11 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His 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 met with the executive principal, head of school and other senior leaders. They met with representatives of the academy trust, local governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders and looked at the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals. They met with leaders who have overall responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about the school's work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders responsible for SEND and reading. They also looked at information about the support for pupils who have additional needs.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and around the school site. They also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all year groups and considered the responses of the pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the comments received through the free-text facility. Inspectors also considered the views of parents and carers who contacted them during the inspection.

Inspection team

Michael Pennington, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Karen Pomeroy	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Rigby	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector

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