

Inspection of Southlands School

Beach Road, Tynemouth, North Shields, Tyne and Wear NE30 2QR

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 May 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

At Southlands, pupils become increasingly confident, sociable individuals. This is because dedicated staff meet their needs and provide them with understanding, caring support.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They study a curriculum that demands progressively more of them. Pupils learn in small groups, in which staff typically provide them with precise teaching and support. This helps many pupils to achieve well. They learn to read with increased confidence and accuracy. Pupils enjoy the stories that adults read to them.

Pupils understand the school's high expectations of their behaviour. Very many behave well. They become more independent, determined learners. Some pupils have complex behavioural needs. Over time, they learn to better manage their behaviour. However, at times, some pupils still become agitated and need the guidance of skilled staff to regulate their behaviour. They do, however, rely less on adult support.

Pupils are safe at school. Pupils trust, and turn to, staff for guidance. Pupils receive high-quality pastoral support in 'The Hub'.

Pupils gain valuable experience of life in the community through visits to local shops, businesses and colleges. These activities help pupils to put into practice the communication and social skills they learn across the curriculum.

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

The school has an inclusive, open culture and high expectations of pupils and staff. Skilled leaders have brought about many improvements since the previous inspection. The developing curriculum is underpinned by leaders' ambition that each pupil 'can be great', and develop the knowledge to make independent, positive decisions. All pupils leave the school with recognised qualifications. Almost all continue in education after the age of 16.

The school assesses each pupil's needs and abilities on entry precisely. This information is shared with staff in pupils' one-page profiles. These profiles are the starting points from which teachers tailor the curriculum to pupils' needs.

The school's focus on reading is paying off handsomely. Pupils at the earliest stages of reading learn to decode words using phonics strategies. They learn to read with accuracy. Pupils read daily in 'learning to read' sessions. They speak with confidence about the texts they read. Pupils' developing knowledge of popular authors is boosted in the daily sessions in which staff read to pupils.

The school has set out what pupils will learn in each subject. In the more established areas of the curriculum, teachers stick to the school's chosen approach

to teaching. Each lesson begins with a 'remember' session that reacquaints pupils with previous learning. Teachers then break new learning down into small pieces. Teachers know that pupils need plenty of repetition and practice to grasp what they study securely. Teachers choose uncluttered resources that help pupils use and remember important information. These approaches are commonplace in most classes and subjects. They are not as firmly established in the few areas of the curriculum where leaders' work is ongoing. Where this is the case, teaching strategies are not as precisely matched to some pupils' needs and these pupils' knowledge is not as secure.

Many pupils need expert support to develop positive learning habits. The improved curriculum and adults' well-judged guidance help pupils to engage with their studies. Learning usually takes place in a productive, happy atmosphere.

The school provides well for pupils' personal development. Pupils are increasingly aware of their feelings, and those of others. Pupils recognise and take steps to manage their emotions and conduct, for example by using purposeful 'mend-it, fix-it walks'. Pupils treat others with respect. They contribute to and benefit from the ethos of acceptance and fairness evident in the school.

Pupils receive well-thought-out careers guidance. The programme of vocational studies helps pupils to learn about potential career options. Pupils make realistically ambitious decisions about their futures.

Staff are proud to work at Southlands. They play their full part in improving the school. The scale of curriculum improvement initially demanded a lot of staff and their workload increased. Leaders regularly seek staff opinion and have taken effective steps to ease the burden on staff, while maintaining the pace of school improvement.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' work to improve the quality of education is ongoing in a few areas of the curriculum. Some teaching is not well matched to pupils' needs, so their knowledge is not secure. The school should continue its work to set out exactly what pupils should learn and to make sure that the teachers deliver the curriculum well in all subjects.

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' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	108653
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	10297258
Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-chairs of the governing body	David Young and Lynne Averill
Headteacher	Angela Noble
Website	www.southlandsnt.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 November 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher took up post shortly before the previous inspection.
- The school provides education for pupils on two sites.
- The school provides specialist education for pupils with autism, moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and mental health needs, and speech, language and communication needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school makes use of eight providers of alternative provision. Four of these providers are unregistered.

Information about this inspection

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

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- 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 visited both of the school's sites.
- Inspectors held several meetings with the headteacher and other senior staff during the course of this inspection.
- Inspectors also met with several groups of teaching and support staff.
- An inspector met with three members of the local governing body (LGB), including one of the co-chairs of the LGB.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of North Tyneside local authority.
- An inspector spoke with representatives of two providers of alternative provision.
- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: English, history, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with curriculum leaders, visited a sample of lessons alongside school leaders, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the quality of education pupils receive in personal, social, health and economic education.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning and about their views on behaviour and the wider experiences they receive at school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour across the duration of the inspection.
- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of pre-appointment checks, looked at safeguarding documentation, and spoke with staff, pupils, parents, governors, representatives of two alternative providers and a representative from North Tyneside local authority. Inspectors considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed the parental responses received through the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. An inspector held a meeting with a small number of parents.
- Inspectors considered the responses received through Ofsted's staff questionnaires. Inspectors took account of the school's analysis of its own surveys of staff, pupil and parent opinion.

Inspection team

John Lucas, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Nicola Beaumont	His Majesty's Inspector
Emily Stevens	His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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