

Inspection of Sandwich Technology School

Deal Road, Sandwich, Kent CT13 0FA

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 May 2024

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

The headteacher of this school is Tracey Savage. This school is part of The Sandwich Technology School Trust, which means other people also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Robyn Starr.

What is it like to attend this school?

Despite many positive relationships between pupils and staff, low standards of behaviour and attitudes have created a culture in which reasonable expectations are routinely flouted. Bullying and fighting are commonplace, and lessons are often disrupted. Attendance is low, and there are high levels of in-school truancy. As a result, many pupils have a fragmented experience of education.

The school's safeguarding culture is poor. When pupils are absent, procedures to establish their whereabouts lack rigour, and actions to seek assurance about their safety are often delayed. When in school, the chaotic environment has left some pupils feeling unsafe. Some pupils do not report concerns because they do not trust the school to deal with them.

Pupils do not benefit from an effective personal development curriculum. They do not have an understanding of fundamental British values, and their knowledge of different faiths and cultures is limited. This means pupils are not adequately prepared for life in modern Britain.

The quality of education is not good enough. Although the curriculum is ambitious and carefully planned, expectations are too low, and the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Consequently, most pupils underachieve significantly.

Standards are higher in the sixth form. Leaders set high expectations for students' education, attendance and pastoral care. As a result, students in the sixth form get a better deal.

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

The quality of teaching is too variable. The school has developed an ambitious curriculum which is well planned in most subjects. It has implemented an effective whole-school reading strategy and put useful support in place for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, even when it is well planned, staff do not always have the subject knowledge or expertise to deliver the curriculum effectively. Too often, the activities selected do not build on pupils' previous learning, and teachers do not check pupils' understanding carefully enough. Teaching strategies often focus on managing pupils' behaviour rather than ensuring that pupils acquire the knowledge and skills they need. This means that too many pupils struggle to remember what they have been taught. Consequently, outcomes in public examinations are persistently low.

Too many pupils do not attend school regularly, and in-school truancy is high. A significant minority of pupils often wander the corridors and choose to miss lessons. Staff struggle to return these pupils to lessons because of the number and attitudes of those involved. This widespread absence and truancy lead to many pupils having significant gaps in their learning. The school's actions to improve pupils' attendance and tackle truancy are not having enough impact.

Standards of behaviour are poor. In some lessons, pupils behave calmly. However, in others, expectations are not consistently applied, which allows poor behaviour to disrupt learning. Fights are a regular occurrence during social times. Pupils and parents say that bullying happens and is not dealt with effectively. Pupils do not always report concerns due to a lack of confidence in the school's ability to deal with issues effectively. As a result, this unacceptable behaviour persists and has left some pupils fearful.

Some pupils benefit from good-quality personal development; some do not. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 experience a well-designed programme that includes dedicated lesson time for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, tutor time for citizenship and wider studies and lessons on physical and mental health. In contrast, pupils in Years 10 and 11 get very little. With no dedicated lesson time and low levels of attendance and engagement during tutor times, personal development for older pupils is largely limited to assemblies. This means that over time, pupils do not acquire the important knowledge they need to be well informed and safe. Consequently, they are ill-equipped for life beyond school.

Students in the sixth form have a more positive experience. Students benefit from a more consistent quality of education, taught by experienced and knowledgeable staff. Students are well behaved and engaged in their learning. High expectations, uncapped aspirations and strong pastoral support from the school ensure that students achieve well. A well-thought-out programme of careers education, opportunities to meet employers and attendance at careers events ensure that all students, including those who are disadvantaged, are well supported in preparing for their next stage in education, employment or training.

Trustees, known as governors, are unaware of critical weaknesses across the school. Therefore, they are not providing effective support and challenge to secure sufficiently high standards of education in the school. Many staff who gave their views during the inspection do not feel well supported, saying that they are not helped to deal with behaviour and their workload and well-being are not considered. A small number reported feeling unsafe and described that concerns raised have not been acted on by the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The school has failed to establish an effective strategy to rigorously oversee pupils' whereabouts and take swift actions to assure their safety. Consequently, pupils, many of whom are disadvantaged or have additional vulnerabilities, are at increased risk of exposure to local risks such as gang activity and exploitation. Staff resources currently available in the school are insufficient to tackle the scale of the problem.

When acute concerns arise about a pupil, appropriate actions are taken to check on their welfare, involving police and other safeguarding partners. In these instances,

record-keeping is accurate and paints a clear picture of the actions taken. However, on too many other occasions, referrals for expert help are not secured in a timely fashion and concerns are not shared with outside agencies as proactively as they should be.

As poor behaviour has become more normalised, this has left pupils with little confidence in the school's ability to keep them safe. Too many pupils do not believe that concerns about their safety will be taken seriously. Worryingly, these factors have led to some pupils now choosing not to report concerns, which includes some who are experiencing child-on-child abuse. Additionally, pupils and parents report that worries about welfare and safety contribute to why pupils do not come to school as often as they should.

Those responsible for governance have not actively sought or listened to the views and experiences of pupils, staff and parents. They are unaware of the scale of the issues. A culture of low expectation is resulting in failure to take prompt and proportionate action to address the concerns that exist.

Collectively, these weaknesses contribute to a poor safeguarding culture, which leaves pupils, including the most vulnerable, at risk of potential harm.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Rates of absence and in-school truancy are too high. Systems are not responsive enough to reliably establish absent pupils' whereabouts and obtain assurances about their safety. A significant number of pupils regularly miss school, which adversely affects their education, including missing out on important personal development opportunities. The school should ensure that a coherent strategy is put in place that urgently improves attendance and tackles truancy successfully.
- Pupils are not confident that if they reported bullying, staff would deal with it effectively. As a result, a significant minority of pupils do not feel safe. The school should ensure that an effective and consistent approach to tackling bullying is established quickly so that pupils' concerns are taken seriously and dealt with in a timely fashion.
- A significant minority of pupils show a lack of respect for adults and other pupils. They have negative attitudes to school and do not see the value of good conduct and good behaviour. The resulting poor behaviour has a negative impact on the experiences of other pupils in the school. The school should assert firm expectations and implement a clear and consistent approach to managing behaviour so that pupils and staff are reassured that the school is a safe place to study and work.
- Disruption to lessons is common and not dealt with well enough. This leads to learning being interrupted. The school must take the necessary actions to ensure that standards of behaviour in lessons improve so that pupils can focus on their

learning.

- The school has not ensured that a strong safeguarding culture and effective safeguarding arrangements are in place. Consequently, pupils who are at risk of potential harm do not always get the support they need. The school must ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and support staff in establishing a strong culture of safeguarding which promotes pupils' well-being successfully.
- The implementation of the curriculum is too variable. As a result, pupils do not achieve well enough. Leaders should continue to develop staff knowledge and skills, including the use of assessment so that the curriculum is delivered more consistently well and pupils' outcomes improve as a result.
- Pupils' experience of the personal development programme is variable. As a result, pupils' understanding of British values, protected characteristics and different faiths and cultures is weak. Leaders must review and develop their personal development programme to ensure that all pupils are supported to develop the knowledge and skills they will need for life in modern Britain.
- Trustees do not have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. This means they do not challenge and support leaders effectively, and so weaknesses have not been addressed in a timely fashion. Trustees need to ensure that they are fully informed of the school's strengths and development priorities so that they can hold leaders accountable and ensure they address areas for improvement effectively.
- Leaders have not addressed the school's weaknesses effectively or checked the impact of their actions. As a result, they do not know whether they are bringing about the necessary improvements. The school should ensure that effective processes are in place to identify and address relative weaknesses and to evaluate the impact of their actions.
- Having considered the evidence, we strongly recommend that the school does 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational

needs and/or disabilities (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	136317
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10341668
Type of school	Secondary modern (non-selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,182
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	129
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Robyn Starr
Headteacher	Tracey Savage
Website	www.sandwich-tech.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 and 2 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school became an academy in October 2010.
- The Sandwich Technology School is a single-academy trust.
- The school currently uses three registered alternative provisions.
- 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.

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.

- 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 the school and have considered that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the board of trustees, including the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: English, modern foreign languages, science, geography, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, 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 pupils from different year groups to discuss their school experiences. This included pupils with leadership responsibilities.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys. They also considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

James Stuart, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Zoe Enser	His Majesty's Inspector
Scott Norman	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Fry	Ofsted Inspector
Zoe Harris	Ofsted Inspector

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