

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Clacton County High School

Walton Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex CO15 6DZ

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 October 2024

Outcome

Clacton County High School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The head of school is Chris Taylor. This school is part of Sigma Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Lyn Wright, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Susan Hammond. There is also an executive headteacher, Neil Gallagher, who is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school and feel safe here. Staff take the time to build positive relationships with pupils and understand them as individuals. Pupils treat others with respect because everyone is made to feel welcome and accepted. They know they can go to a trusted adult should they have any concerns.

Pupils learn an ambitious curriculum, including those students in the sixth form. The school has high expectations for what pupils should achieve. Lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils benefit from high-quality teaching. This enables them to progress well through the curriculum. However, some pupils do not master the basics of reading and writing well enough.

Most pupils behave well with few instances of low-level disruption. Those who do misbehave are helped to refocus quickly. When bullying occurs, the school takes it seriously and works to resolve the situation swiftly and fairly.

Pupils have access to an extensive enhancement curriculum, in lessons and after school. The diverse range of activities include sports, arts, robotics, charity work and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. These help to develop pupils' talents and interests. The student leadership team is proud of its contribution to improving the school environment.

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

The curriculum is well designed, ambitious and meets pupils' learning needs effectively. The wide range of academic and vocational courses, including in the sixth form, are well structured. This ensures that pupils make connections to their previous learning. As a result, most pupils achieve well.

However, some pupils have not yet mastered the basic skills of reading and writing. This means they are not able access all learning. Some pupils do not record their work accurately. They do not always complete work in line with the different subject curriculum expectations. Leaders have provided extra support for some pupils, which has a positive impact. However, some pupils who need the extra help are yet to receive it to allow them to catch up.

Leaders provide clear information for staff about pupils' needs, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff receive high-quality professional development. This allows them to provide effective support for pupils with SEND. Learning activities are carefully planned to allow pupils to understand and remember new information. Consequently, pupils with SEND achieve well.

Sixth-form students are proud of their school. They respond to the high expectations and achieve well. Teachers use a variety of approaches to encourage students to think deeply, to make connections and to support their views and ideas. Students go on to a range of appropriate academic and professional destinations. They are prepared well for their next steps.

The school has successfully introduced a revised behaviour management system. Staff and pupils understand the expectations and use the system consistently.

The school has high expectations for pupils' attendance. It uses a range of effective strategies to support many pupils and their families to overcome their barriers to attendance. This has a positive impact for most pupils. However, on occasions, the school does not implement some of these actions soon enough. As a result, some pupils do not attend school regularly enough and miss out on vital learning.

The school's approach to promoting pupils' personal development is a strength. Pupils are encouraged to talk openly about sensitive topics. They develop an understanding of mutual respect and tolerance of others who may have different characteristics. The school's careers programme helps pupils to learn about the range of options available to them. They have access to unbiased advice and guidance. Pupils have opportunities to meet with employers, post-16 and higher education institutions. This helps them to make the right choices when moving on to their next steps.

The school is not complacent. It wants to provide pupils with the best opportunities to be successful. With the support of trust colleagues, the school accurately reviews all aspects of its work. When needed, the school introduces new initiatives effectively. Staff are

positive about the support they receive. The school has built positive working relationships with staff and is considerate of their workload.

Trustees and governors have high aspirations for all pupils. They are proactive and know the school well. They provide appropriate support and challenge to school leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, do not develop the basic foundational knowledge of reading and writing well enough. This prevents them from accessing the full curriculum and achieving as well as they could. The school should ensure that weaknesses in reading and writing are identified early, and that effective support programmes are put in place to help the pupils to catch up.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This means they miss their learning and develop gaps in their knowledge. The school should continue to raise expectations and put in effective, appropriate actions early enough, to ensure that all pupils have high attendance.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in September 2018.

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	138084
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10318615
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
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	1,890
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	320
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Susan Hammond
CEO of the trust	Lyn Wright
Executive Headteacher	Neil Gallagher
Website	www.countyhigh.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 September 2018

Information about this school

- The school uses 10 providers of alternative provision, of which nine are unregistered.
- Since the last inspection, the sixth-form provision has been relocated to a new centre.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the Sigma Trust, trustees, the chair of the local governing committee and its representatives.
- Inspectors met with the CEO of the trust, the executive headteacher, head of school, senior leaders, subject leaders and staff.
- Inspectors spoke with staff representatives of some of the alternative provisions.
- 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 observed pupils’ behaviour in lessons, around school and at social times. They considered pupils’ views about behaviour in school. They also spoke with staff about pupils’ behaviour, their workload and well-being.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 reviewed a range of documents, including school policies, the school development plan, the self-evaluation form and minutes from meetings of the local governing body.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted’s pupil survey and Ofsted’s staff survey. They considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text messages.

Inspection team

Rob James, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Nutman	Ofsted Inspector
David Piercy	Ofsted Inspector

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