

Inspection of Southbrook School

Bishop Westall Road, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon EX2 6JB

Inspection dates:	26 and 27 November 2024
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school. There is a calm and orderly environment because routines are well established. Pupils behave well. They value the support of staff for their personal development. They learn how to make positive choices and respectful relationships. Pupils feel safe in school and attend school regularly.

Pupils at Southbrook School have education, health and care (EHC) plans that detail how their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) should be met. The school has designed an ambitious curriculum for pupils to learn. However, too much variation exists in how well the curriculum is taught. As a result, some pupils do not achieve well in some subjects.

Positive working relationships exist between pupils, staff, parents and carers. Many parents rightly express that their children are at the heart of the school's work. Pupils appreciate the opportunities to try different experiences and develop new interests at school. The outdoor education provision helps to support the development of pupils' resilience, independence and teamwork. Pupils are proud of their achievements, such as completing the Jubilee Challenge. They relish the chance to represent their school, for example, as school councillors or Champions for Change. Older pupils value how well the school prepares their skills for life.

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders, including governors, have identified and detailed important areas for improvement in the school. Actions already completed by the school, have begun to effectively raise standards of education and provision. For example, careful monitoring and support for pupils' attendance has led to a significant reduction in absences. Staff appreciate the impact recent changes have had on their workload and well-being. Leaders demonstrate the necessary knowledge, skills and determination to implement the changes needed to improve the school's quality of education.

The school has identified the essential knowledge pupils should know and remember across subjects. Subject leaders continue to refine how the curriculum is sequenced. This supports staff to build their knowledge of how to help pupils achieve the expectations of the curriculum and work towards their EHC plan targets. This work is in its infancy. Consequently, there is variation in staff knowledge of the curriculum and how to teach it. For example, too often learning activities do not help pupils to secure new knowledge. Teachers check pupils' prior knowledge in lessons. However, in some subjects, the results of these checks are not used well to adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. This leads to pupils repeating knowledge and skills they have already secured, leaving them insufficient time to learn and practise new concepts.

The school makes learning to read well a priority. Staff find several ways to engage pupils with reading. Pupils enjoy listening to stories and exploring high-quality books in the school's library and with technological aids. Some pupils are in the early stages of learning to read. Pupils who receive regular phonics teaching with knowledgeable and skilled staff

make strong progress through the phonics programme. Reading books are appropriately matched to pupils' reading ability and age. Disadvantaged pupils achieve particularly well in phonics and reading due to the effective individual support they receive.

Education and therapy staff work together to plan and deliver bespoke personal development programmes for pupils. This joint work helps pupils learn how to confidently manage budgets, cook healthy meals, travel independently and care for their physical and mental health. A comprehensive careers offer ensures pupils make informed choices about future jobs. As a result, pupils move on to college and remain in education.

Pupils learn that people are different and have different life experiences. They know that all people deserve to be treated with respect. Through the school's new behaviour programme and personal development offer, pupils increasingly understand their feelings and how to respond appropriately. This work has resulted in a reduction in the number of behaviour incidents across the school. Pupils learn that people may have different opinions. They are learning how to listen to and respond appropriately to other points of view.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has recently developed its curriculum. Staff do not have a secure knowledge of the new curriculum's content and expectations. As a result, in some subjects, learning activities are not well matched to the intended learning outcomes. This does not help pupils to secure knowledge and understanding well enough. The school needs to support staff to develop their knowledge of the revised curriculum so that it is implemented effectively.
- The school does not routinely use assessment information to effectively adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' needs or education, health and care (EHC) plan targets. Consequently, pupils make insufficient progress through the school's curriculum. The school should ensure that staff use assessment information to make appropriate adaptations to the curriculum to improve pupils' achievement.

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	113634
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10322208
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Gray
Headteacher	Simon Winward
Website	www.southbrook.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 June 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Southbrook School is a special school for pupils with complex needs, including moderate or severe learning difficulties and autism. All pupils have EHC plans.
- It is a maintained school within Devon's local authority. The school has foundation trust status and, along with other special schools in Devon, is a member of SENitient Trust.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior staff.
- An inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of Devon local authority and the school's external improvement partner.
- An inspector listened to pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 read to a known adult.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, looked at samples of pupils' work and EHC plans and associated documents.
- The inspectors observed pupils during social times and spoke with pupils and leaders about opportunities for pupils' personal development.
- 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 considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the survey for staff.

Inspection team

Marie Thomas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Smith

Ofsted Inspector

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