

Inspection of Victory Park Academy

Wentworth Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 5LG

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who attend Victory Park Academy have not had positive experiences of school and education previously. Overall, pupils benefit from their time here. Increasing proportions of pupils completing their education here gain a range of useful qualifications that help with the next stage of education or employment. Almost all pupils who attend for a short time are successful in returning to mainstream schools to continue with their education.

Staff have a strong understanding of pupils' social and emotional needs. Staff are caring and supportive. They manage pupils' behaviour sensitively and well. Pupils receive the help they need to improve and manage their own behaviour. They know the high expectations that adults have in terms of behaviour. Pupils feel safe. Bullying is rare and not tolerated.

Most pupils make strong improvements in their attitudes to learning and attendance, especially those who stay here for a longer period.

For pupils at the school for a short time, there is not a clear focus on what these pupils need to learn in all subjects. This is particularly true for primary-school pupils who are still learning to read. This does not help pupils to catch up or keep up with learning when they return to their usual school.

Pupils have many trips, activities and visits from speakers. Pupils develop new interests, explore career opportunities and are prepared for life beyond school.

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

Leaders want to give pupils the best possible chance to re-engage with learning and education. Leaders provide a broad curriculum. They organise the curriculum well in most subjects. Pupils learn important subject knowledge in an order that builds on what they already know. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge. They ensure that important knowledge is revisited to help pupils remember it.

Leaders prioritise improving pupils' behaviour. This is so that pupils are less likely to miss out on education in the future due to their behaviour. However, leaders have not identified the important subject knowledge that pupils who are at Victory Park for a short time need to learn to help them return to school successfully. Leaders have not ensured that teachers identify gaps in learning for these pupils quickly enough. Teaching is not always adapted to build on what these pupils already know and can do.

Leaders know the importance of pupils being able to read, write and communicate well. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to use and develop their reading and writing knowledge across the curriculum. However, teachers occasionally choose activities that do not let pupils use or practise their writing knowledge. There are weaknesses in leaders' approach to teaching reading. Staff have only recently

started to receive the training they need to teach phonics effectively. Pupils who struggle with reading have not had the help they need in order to learn to read fluently quickly enough. Pupils do not read a range of text types across all year groups. Leaders know that there is still more work to do to promote reading for pleasure.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the full curriculum. Staff understand pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs well. There is training planned to help staff better support other types of SEND. Staff do not use the information on how to support the learning of pupils with SEND consistently well. Some staff do not know pupils' individual targets or what pupils need to do to achieve these.

Leaders promote pupils' personal development well. Pupils deepen their understanding of relevant issues in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). Pupils learn about getting on with others, taking responsibility for their actions and respecting individual differences. Leaders provide helpful and relevant guidance so that pupils can make informed choices about future careers, further education or training.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel well supported. School leaders have identified priorities for improvement. However, leaders have only recently planned or started to provide the training that teachers need to achieve whole-school priorities. This is particularly the case for the teaching of reading and pupils with SEND. School leaders have an over-generous view of the effectiveness of some aspects of their work.

The Parallel Learning Trust and academy advisory council check regularly on leaders' work. They hold leaders to account. They ensure that improvements are made to the quality of provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils have a good understanding of different types of risk, including those posed by social media and technology. Through PSHE lessons and a well-planned programme of assemblies and visiting speakers, pupils learn how to stay safe. Leaders work closely with other agencies to make pupils aware of risks such as gang activity and criminal exploitation. Leaders follow up absence rigorously and check that pupils are safe.

Leaders' checks that staff are suitable to work in schools are thorough and accurately recorded. Staff know how to recognise and report concerns. Leaders act swiftly and appropriately to keep pupils safe from harm.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not identified the knowledge in the curriculum that they want pupils who are on the school's short programmes to learn. Aspects of the quality of education do not link well with what pupils have learned previously in their usual school or what learning pupils may have missed. Leaders should ensure that teachers use their checks on pupils' learning, combined with the information they receive from other schools, to identify the important knowledge that pupils on short-stay programmes need to learn.
- Leaders have only recently prioritised reading. Staff have not had the training they need to teach reading effectively to pupils who have not gained reading fluency. Leaders should ensure that they urgently implement their intended curriculum plans for the teaching of reading so it can be taught consistently and well.
- Individual support plans are not used consistently by staff to plan lessons or adapt activities. While teachers have a good understanding of how to support pupils' SEMH needs, they are not as able to support pupils with other types of SEND. This prevents some pupils from learning as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all staff know how to support the full range of SEND in the school effectively.
- School leaders have an over-generous view of the school's effectiveness. They have not identified the weaknesses in the curriculum in a timely fashion. Leaders should ensure that their regular checks on teaching are used to accurately identify areas for improvement and determine whether the actions they are taking are bringing about the improvements intended.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	142938
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10200559
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision sponsored
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Neville Diffey
Headteacher	Mark Aspel
Website	www.victorypark.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened in 2017. It is sponsored by the Parallel Learning Trust. The school shares a building with another school in the trust, Sutton House Academy. Sutton House Academy is a special school for pupils with SEMH needs. It is separately registered and inspected by Ofsted. Both schools were formed from a single predecessor school, Seabrook College.
- Working in partnership with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, the school provides up to 75 places for pupils aged five to 16. It caters for pupils who have been permanently excluded from school or who are at risk of permanent exclusion.
- Many pupils are at the school for between six and 12 weeks and receive support to return to mainstream schools. Some pupils move to special schools. There are some pupils who remain at the school for longer periods, particularly in key stage 4. Almost all Year 11 pupils complete their compulsory education at the school. Pupils in key stage 4 can study for a broad range of academic and vocational qualifications.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are above average.

- The school does not make use of any other alternative provision.
- At the time of the inspection, the special educational need coordinator (SENCo) from Sutton House Academy was working for one day a week at Victory Park Academy.

Information about this inspection

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

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The lead inspector held meetings with the chair of the academy advisory council and the executive lead from the trust. The lead inspector held a virtual meeting with representatives of the local authority.
- To evaluate the quality of education, inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, design technology and personal, social, health and economic education. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons across year groups, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils and staff. Inspectors also looked at planning in other subjects and work in other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke to the SENCo from Sutton House Academy and carried out activities to evaluate the effectiveness of provision for pupils with SEND.
- To check that safeguarding was effective, inspectors checked staff members' understanding of how to keep pupils safe from harm and spoke to pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and headteacher to discuss their work and review examples of the actions taken to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation relating to the work of the school, including school policies, procedures, and the work of leaders and those responsible for governance. Inspectors also looked at records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- There were no responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The lead inspector considered reviews to the school's own recent parent survey.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views by speaking to pupils in lessons, at other times in the school day and in a meeting arranged by school leaders. The lead inspector also reviewed responses to the school's most recent survey of pupils' views. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- To gather the views of staff members, inspectors spoke to groups of staff and analysed the nine responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Paul Wilson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Liz Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

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