



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR SOUTHCHURCH HIGH SCHOOL

Name of School:	Southchurch High School
Headteacher/Principal:	Tracy Airoll
Hub:	East London Hub
School phase:	Secondary
MAT (if applicable):	Partnership Learning Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Effective
Date of this Review:	18 May 2026
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	N/A
Date of last QA Review:	N/A
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Requires Improvement
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	15 November 2023

1. Context and character of the school

Southchurch High School is a smaller than average, mixed, non-selective 11-16 secondary school with just under seven hundred students and is currently under-subscribed. It is situated close to the centre of Southend-on-Sea admitting many students from a poor socio-economic catchment area across a wide range of feeder primary schools. The area also serves four secondary grammar schools and two secondary faith schools.

The majority of students are from White British backgrounds, with the remainder coming from a range of minority ethnic groups and mixed heritages. Attainment on entry is below the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged students is well above the national average, currently sitting at almost half the student population. The percentage of students with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is above the national average, as is the number of students with an education, health and care plan (EHCP). The school is part of the Partnership Learning Trust offering senior leaders both support and challenge. The Headteacher is proud of the ethos, “a community of opportunity, learning and aspiration” placing an emphasis not only on improving students’ learning chances but also on them being responsible, respectful and caring individuals. A staff member proudly said, “this school invests in developing everyone to achieve their best. Everyone is cared about; you are not just a number.”

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Senior leaders are right to be proud of their school’s achievements but they are not complacent, recognising that the school is on a journey and there is still more work to be done.
- Senior leaders remain committed to providing the best opportunities for all students with the support and confidence of their Trust. They have established a clear and ambitious vision, offering a better quality of education for all which is now embedded and shared by staff. This is impacting on expectations and pedagogy, as evidenced in assemblies, classroom delivery and staff voice.
- Senior leaders are relentless in promoting high expectations through the teaching and learning foundations, as evidenced by the classroom non-negotiables and routine lesson structures.
- Leaders recognise the importance of focusing on improving teachers’ subject knowledge and pedagogical skills as well as the appropriate use of assessment for learning.

- Leaders have rightly focused on high-quality training and development. There is a well-planned schedule which is tailored to meet whole school, departmental and individual needs. Senior leaders' investment in staff professional development is now impacting on outcomes.
- Middle leaders make a valuable contribution to the quality of learning and teaching. They benefit from the professional learning sessions particularly on lesson planning and assessment for learning.
- Leaders are committed to all students achieving their fullest potential. In the best lessons, staff work hard to provide a healthy balance of support and challenge.
- Leaders foster an inclusive culture which is respected by all staff and students. One staff member said, "Finally, we've got a school right for our students."
- Senior leaders are highly visible and engage effectively with staff, students, parents and other key stakeholders. Staff feel totally supported as evidenced by a staff member who said, "I can knock on anyone's door, even the headteacher is never too busy."
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum provides more than just academic and vocational qualifications working hard to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, contributing to a more positive attitude to learning and significantly improved behaviour in lessons and around the site.
- Leaders provide a range of opportunities allowing students to develop and stretch their talents, interests and cultural capital. Students appreciate these extra-curricular activities and make effective use of the opportunities through clubs, societies and trips at home and abroad.
- Leaders actively promote staff and student voice, welcoming, listening and reflecting on all feedback received.
- Leaders prepare students well for life in modern Britain through assemblies, drop down days and the formal curriculum, addressing local and national issues ensuring students understand the values of democracy, tolerance and respect as evidenced in the Year 8 refugee crisis topic.
- Leaders prepare students well for their futures in education, employment and training. They receive unbiased information about next steps and benefit from quality careers guidance and provision. This is impacting on students' aspirations with more seeking places at the academic post-16 provision offered in the local grammar schools.
- The school is well supported by the Trust and benefits from this additional resource. The school improvement partner is actively involved and the senior leadership team strengthened.

2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if...

- ... leaders continued to successfully promote and celebrate the many strengths of the school, further enhancing engagement with the local community and parents/carers whilst maintaining the exceptionally positive staff morale.
- ... leaders continued to build confidently on the highly effective systems introduced over the past academic year, with these now embedded and consistently implemented across the school as it operates with increased autonomy.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Leaders provide an aspirational curriculum designed to give students the knowledge and cultural capital necessary to succeed in life. The curriculum is not limited or narrowed for SEND students. It is curriculum coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment as widely demonstrated by middle leaders and classroom practitioners. The school follows national curriculum guidelines offering breadth and depth from Year 7 with a broad range of subjects on offer at Key Stage 4.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge and where teachers operate outside their specialist areas, leaders take positive steps to assure the best possible standards through high quality professional development, peer support, coaching and monitoring processes.
- Teachers structure their lessons using an agreed model. In the best lessons, teachers present their subject matter effectively, promoting literacy and oracy. They check students' understanding systematically, identify misconceptions accurately and provide clear feedback. Teaching is adapted as necessary in response to feedback and lessons are planned to meet individual passport information. A Year 9 student said, "I am enjoying my lessons more now."
- The school's assessment strategy is clear and is implemented consistently. It helps students embed and use knowledge enabling teachers to check for understanding and in the best lessons, inform their teaching.
- The school's literacy strategy is designed to prioritise reading, writing and oracy, incorporating recommendations and research from expert sources. Students participate in a reading focus regularly each week and teachers reinforce subject specific key words.
- Leaders promote and monitor the quality of work students produce. In most cases, the presentation in books is of a consistent standard and leaders are working hard to embed their high expectations of literacy.

- The school is actively addressing the readiness of most students, including the disadvantaged, for their next stage of education, employment or training. However, a minority still lack the qualifications needed to progress further.
- Not all students routinely achieve the best possible outcomes. However, the overall standard is improving and the shift is in the right direction. All leaders recognise the continuing challenge to ensure that the outcomes of all students meet national benchmarks. Leaders are implementing a variety of strategies to further improve outcomes which include more focused and targeted intervention as well as quality first teaching and coaching.
- Leaders' high expectations are reflected in students' behaviours and conduct. Low-level disruption is not tolerated, and off-task behaviour is not allowed to disrupt learning or the day-to-day running of the school. One early career teacher (ECT) said, "I am a teacher now, not a manager of behaviour. I can confidently plan my lessons and teach."
- Students' attitudes are generally positive, and they are proud of their achievements. Staff invest in rewarding students which include house points, pizza parties and even an ice-cream in the park. Relationships between staff and students demonstrate a culture of respect. A member of staff said, "this is a completely different school."
- Attendance has improved but remains a priority. Leaders are aspirational about students being in school and are striving to move attendance above national benchmarks.
- The transformation of the school was summed up by a member of staff who said, "I am loving the future. I am excited about what can happen."

3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if...

- ... leaders further enhanced the curriculum and pedagogy by embedding greater stretch and challenge, enabling all students to excel and achieve their full potential.
- ... leaders continued to strengthen the school's literacy culture through increasingly consistent written work and a growing range of opportunities for purposeful extended writing across the curriculum.
- ... leaders maintained a strong strategic focus on attendance, supporting continued improvements in student engagement, wellbeing and outcomes.

4.1 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with additional needs - What went well

- There is an established culture of inclusion which runs throughout the school. Staff can access a range of information and data on students with disadvantage and additional needs (SEND) enabling teachers to be aware of their learning requirements. In the best lessons, teachers use this information to inform their planning and adapt their teaching to maximise learning.
- There are leads for SEND and disadvantaged pupils but the approach is a shared responsibility with a team of staff engaging in supporting these students including a family liaison officer. A member of staff said, “this is a real team effort, we work together to ensure no child is left behind.”
- All teachers use seating plans, reading ages and prior attainment data. In the best lessons, teachers use these to target students with additional needs, using skilful questioning and appropriate support. Staff work hard to mitigate against this as evidenced by the random name cards giving every student the opportunity to have a voice and be heard.
- Leaders use a range of resources and tools to identify where students may require additional support. In the best lessons, these are well used and are impacting on outcomes.
- In those lessons where teachers skilfully scaffold the learning, the behaviour and attitudes of vulnerable students are very positive. They are more engaged in their learning and better able to understand complex concepts.
- Leaders provide a range of interventions to support students and help them in their learning including check-ins for equipment, revision clubs, literacy support and assistance with basic skills.
- The school offers a daily breakfast club which runs from 07.30 every morning allowing students to start the day well and ready to learn with over two hundred students regularly attending.
- In the short term, leaders have prioritised Key Stage 4 students. The intention is to roll the successful intervention strategies out to students lower down the school.
- Leaders are fully committed to ensuring students with SEND or are disadvantaged can access the wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Leaders provide opportunities within the budget to support them financially enabling them to access school trips and other activities where there is a cost.
- The leaders for SEND and disadvantaged pupils are passionate and committed to improving the life chances of these young people. They work tirelessly to have a positive impact on their learning and share a clear vision for improvement. A member of the team said, “we want Southchurch High School to be the very best school for these very special children.”

- Leaders are most proud of the inclusive pedagogy and the relentless investment in attendance. These successful strategies have resulted in the gap between the school's disadvantaged data and the national figure is closing and students' self-esteem and confidence growing.

4.2 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with additional needs - Even better if...

- ... as lesson structures remain consistent across the school, leaders ensured that staff are empowered through high-quality training and support to deliver anchored adaptations for all students with additional needs, securing an inclusive and ambitious learning experience for all.

5. Area of Excellence

N/A

Following the QA Review

The review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. However, we encourage you to share the main findings with your hub/hub manager so that they can support your hub's activity planning. Challenge Partners will also collate and analyse content reports from across the partnership of schools and trusts including using AI tools to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector (sharing these with the partnership) each year. The QA Review reports remain confidential to Challenge Partners and the host school. This ensures that schools embrace the review as a development process, acting as a catalyst for their ongoing improvement. This is the primary purpose of the QA review. However, our aim is that the thematic analysis will demonstrate the additional value of a sector wide overview, illustrated with real-life examples.

For further support following your QA Review, schools can access the School Support Directory; the Challenge Partners online tool that enables schools to connect with other schools in your hub and across the national partnership of schools. The School Support Directory can be accessed via the Challenge Partners website. (<https://www.challengepartners.org/>)



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Finally, following the QA Review, schools may find it useful to refer to research such as the EEF toolkit to help inform their approach to tackling the EBIs identified in the report (<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit>)