

Excellence in Pupil Development Award

Verification Report

School name:	Sutton House Academy
School address and postcode:	Wentworth Road, Southend on Sea SS2 5LG
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Award verifier:	Mark Jennett
Award adviser (if applicable):	
Date of verification:	2 May 2025

Commentary on the evidence provided:

The presentation by the Head and Award coordinator showcased the significant progress the school has made over the period of the Award in terms of both attendance and behaviour for learning. It is clear that personal development informs all aspects of the school's provision and is threaded through both curriculum and policies.

Going forward, leaders should take careful note of the specific evidence requirements of the EPDA as these were not always fully addressed in the written evidence. At reassessment it will be particularly important to fulfil the evaluative elements of each objective.

Strengths identified during verification:

Leaders and staff know and understand their pupils well. Detailed provision plans are accessible to all staff and these inform ISPs in classrooms which are reviewed daily. Targets are clear and well monitored and parents can also access and comment on provision mapping. Pupil passports contain information on children's strengths, concerns,

preferences and ambitions. Staff have received CPD to support the writing and monitoring of these profiles. Twice daily briefings also ensure that all staff are aware of pupils' progress and alerted to any concerns.

Curriculum maps demonstrate how personal development is addressed across all subjects and lessons are matched to issues and concerns identified through pupil discussions and feedback. There is a particular focus on emotional wellbeing and mental health in the summer term to help support children through the long break.

The assembly programme focusses on key aspects of personal development and there are further sessions involving a range of external providers as well as visits to the theatre, farms, zoos and adventure parks. The local Bikeability programme has worked with children to help them build bikes which they then use to travel to school. Students are also encouraged to try a range of activities (cooking, yoga etc) and these are recorded in activity passports. A full enrichment programme includes horse riding, combat, golf, trampolining etc. Students are encouraged to pursue leadership opportunities as prefects, take part in community activities such as litter picking or raising funds for a local homeless charity and many also work towards achieving the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

The school uses a range of literacy, mathematics and phonics interventions (including Lexia, Write Inc, Fresh Start, Spellzone and Times Table Rock Stars) to support the development of key skills and there is also inhouse SALT support.

Zones of regulation are used to help children self-regulate and pupils are supported to identify strategies that work for them. They described using breathing techniques, fidget toys, time outs and other means to help them manage their feelings. Positive learning behaviours are acknowledged with reward points.

Diversity is promoted through the curriculum and staff described how, for example, pupils have been supported to discuss discrimination and to question information they see online.

Over the last year or so, the school has made considerable progress in its efforts to improve both attendance and behaviour. Physical interventions and suspensions have also reduced in number. This has been achieved through a holistic approach encompassing changes to the curriculum, structure of the school day, rewards systems and pupil groupings. Staff retention has also improved, resulting in a reduction in the use of agency staff and a consequent increase in the consistency of provision.

All staff undergo regular training in key areas of SEMH such as effective behaviour support and trauma-informed practice. The effectiveness of CPD is closely monitored both through staff surveys and evaluations of individual sessions.

During discussions, I was impressed by the way in which staff seemed united in their approach to supporting the young people in their care. They display a good knowledge of the risk factors and barriers for their pupils, including those which exist within the communities they come from, many of which are areas of significant deprivation.

The school is confident to try out different models of provision. KS1 learners are taught in the main sensory room and more vulnerable KS3 and 4 students spend the bulk of their time on a single corridor to minimise disruption to their learning.

Another interesting feature is the large murals in corridors and plentiful displays of children's work. This is relatively unusual in special settings but staff have found that it works well for

many of their pupils. Children had input into the content of murals and staff described how encouraging children who may be reluctant to have their work on display has, over time, impacted positively on their confidence and self-esteem. The school's willingness to offer supportive challenge to its students was also reflected in the conversations I had with staff who described how they use the curriculum to address issues such as diversity and extremism in society.

I met several students who described how staff help them develop strategies for self-regulation and support discussion and debate. They talked about how they can keep themselves safe and where they can go for support both in and out of school.

The school offers support to families around pupil development and is good at sharing successes, both internally and via social media. Parents say that staff have provided advice on, for example, supporting positive behaviours, raising their children's self-esteem and discussing what they would like to do in the future. They say that teachers and other adults at the school are good at 'spotting children's moods' and breaking down tasks to make them accessible.

Areas for development:

The Award coordinator has identified a number of useful next steps including, for example, surveying the types of apprenticeships and jobs students go on to and using this data to develop further relevant work experience links with local businesses.

As mentioned above, and particularly for reassessment of the Award, ensure that provision around pupil development is regularly and consistently monitored. Consider using the resources on AwardPlace for this.

As discussed, also think about collecting more demographic information via the school's own surveys in order to identify trends amongst different groups of students.

To further celebrate improved attendance, in addition to rewarding students, also acknowledge the efforts of parents whose children show progress in this area.

Verifier recommendation:

I am delighted to recommend that Sutton House Academy receive the Excellence in Pupil Development Award for a period of three years.

Head teacher comments:

I am extremely proud that Sutton House Academy has achieved the Excellence in Pupil Development Award. This recognition means a great deal to our staff, students, and families. I would like to thank all the team for their ongoing dedication and hard work, and to thank our parents and carers for their continued support.



The feedback in the report is both encouraging and helpful. It highlights the strengths we have worked hard to build, especially around emotional wellbeing, curriculum development, and our holistic approach to learning. I also appreciate the clear guidance around next steps, which we will take on board as we continue to improve our offer for all pupils.

Thank you again for the opportunity to take part in this process and for recognising the progress our school has made.

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