

Inspection of Sutton House Academy

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

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 March 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Alexis Bull. This school is part of Parallel Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the interim chief executive officer, Angela Barry, and overseen by a local board of governors, chaired by Lorne Stefanini.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils settle in quickly when they join the school. Those who find it more difficult to cope with changes are supported well to gain confidence over time. Pupils form positive working relationships with school staff. They know the adults who support them want the best for them. Consequently, pupils are typically respectful and responsive to the high expectations promoted across all aspects of school life. The school has high ambitions for all pupils to achieve. The carefully adapted curriculum enables individuals to succeed. Because of this, pupils achieve well.

Pupils of all ages play nicely together in the playground. Some of the older pupils support the younger ones in lessons such as meditation and yoga. This helps raise all pupils' self-esteem.

Pupils enjoy learning in a range of subjects, for example art. Pupils appreciate the additional experiences they are given, such as being able to participate in achieving the Duke of Edinburgh Award. The importance of keeping safe, maintaining healthy lifestyles and having respectful relationships is regularly reinforced in different situations. Pupils feel safe in school. Pupils are clear about whom to speak to if they are worried and are trusting of staff to sort things out.

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

The school is equally ambitious for pupils' academic achievement as it is for their social, emotional and mental health. The school plans the curriculum well for pupils' different needs and abilities, ensuring that they can achieve well. The curriculum helps pupils to engage in their learning successfully, including in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans are used effectively. High-quality support meets pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs from the outset. This means that pupils settle in quickly and are ready to learn.

Leaders have thought carefully about the content of the curriculum taught at different stages. In most subjects, learning is planned to build on what pupils already know, with regular opportunities to revisit important knowledge and skills. This ensures that pupils remember more of the things they have learned over time. However, in a few subjects, which have been recently reviewed and introduced, the key knowledge and identified strands of learning have not been finely tuned to meet the needs of pupils. In these areas, teachers have not had all the training that they need. As a result, teachers are less confident in their teaching. Occasionally, in these subjects, pupils have some gaps in their learning and do not always achieve as well as elsewhere in the curriculum.

The school ensures that reading is a high priority in all key stages. Daily phonics and reading sessions ensure that pupils learn to read fluently. Pupils who struggle to learn to read are identified quickly. They receive extra support to help them to catch up. Consequently, pupils progress well through the reading curriculum and most become confident readers.

Pupils generally behave well. They focus in lessons knowing the opportunities of support they have to meet their individual needs. Harassment, discrimination and other forms of abuse are not tolerated. Relationships are positive. Staff are skilful in spotting signs of anxiety that might lead to challenging behaviour. Effective action defuses situations quickly in lessons and around the school. Leaders work hard on attendance. As a result, pupils' attendance is getting better.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is threaded through all aspects of the school's work. The curriculum is well planned. It includes life skills such as making tea and toast at breakfast club. Pupils gain confidence and improve their self-esteem. They are taught how to keep safe, both physically and mentally, and to form healthy relationships. Tolerance and respect for individual differences are routinely promoted. Older pupils are prepared effectively to take the next steps beyond school.

Leaders have acted decisively to continue to improve the school since the previous inspection. Leadership has been strengthened. Staff are well supported. They are proud to work at Sutton House Academy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a very small number of subjects, the school has recently implemented a new curriculum. Leaders are still finely tuning the key knowledge that pupils need to know. In these subjects, teachers are less confident in their subject knowledge and how to make it work in the classroom. On occasion, this leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school needs to ensure that teachers have the support and training that they need to teach these subjects well, to ensure that pupils consistently achieve

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	142940
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10295085
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of local governing body	Lorne Stefanini
Interim CEO of the trust	Angela Barry
Headteacher	Alexis Bull
Website	www.suttonhouseacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 October 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Sutton House Academy provides places for boys and girls who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- Pupils enter the school at different stages of their education. Most have experienced long periods of disruption to their formal education before they join.
- The school uses alternative providers to extend the range of vocational curriculum opportunities for pupils.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), who started in September 2023.
- The school has a resourced base for pupils who are at risk of permanent exclusion for behaviour or social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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.
- Inspectors met with a range of leaders, including senior leaders.
- The lead inspector spoke with the chair of the governing body on the phone.
- The lead inspector spoke to the executive director of performance and standards who was representing the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, and relationships and sex education and health education. An inspector looked at other areas of the curriculum including art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons with leaders, looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke with teachers.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils. When they did, an adult from the school was present.
- Inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted's staff and parent survey, including free-text comments.
- A range of documentation was considered, including the school's improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation and curriculum documents. This included information relating to pupils' behaviour and their wider development.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took into account the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which leaders had created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector spoke to four alternative providers on the telephone about safeguarding and the progress of pupils who attend there.

Inspection team

Suzanne Thrower, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Cloke

Ofsted Inspector

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