

Inspection of Chase High School

Prittlewell Chase, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex SS0 0RT

Inspection dates:	12 and 13 November and 18 November 2024
The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Inadequate
Personal development	Inadequate
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Sixth-form provision	Inadequate
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Matthew Suttanwood. This school is part of Discovery Educational Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO) Ryan Duff, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Helen Witty.

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils, particularly girls, do not feel safe at Chase High School. They lack confidence that adults will help them to resolve their worries. Consequently, some pupils do not report incidents of discriminatory behaviour, such as sexual harassment. When cases are reported, the school does not follow its policies and procedures well enough. This means that it does not support pupils effectively or protect them from harm.

The school has not realised its ambition for pupils' academic success. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, do not achieve well. While the curriculum is designed to be ambitious this is not translated into pupils' classroom experiences. The specific needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not identified accurately. These pupils do not access their curriculum entitlement. They do not learn well.

Pupils regularly experience bullying, racial, sexual and homophobic discrimination. Discriminatory language in the form of 'banter' has become normalised. Many staff do not intervene and challenge pupils when this happens. This results in some pupils not enjoying school. The school has not identified the extent of the problem, nor has it taken suitable actions to change the culture. Too many pupils continue to suffer in silence.

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

Over time, pupils, including students in the sixth form, have not learned all that they should across a range of subjects. As a result, they do not achieve well in the public examinations that they enter at the end of Years 11 and 13. Despite the school developing a curriculum that is, on the whole, ambitious, pupils' learning remains weak.

Teachers spend too much time focusing on preparing pupils for answering examination questions. This means that much of pupils' learning is focused on facts and processes. They do not learn topics in the depth that they should. Teachers do not routinely support pupils to link what they already know to new learning. Too often the activities that pupils and students in the sixth form complete are mundane and too easy. Pupils' books show that these tasks are often uncompleted. These activities do not help pupils to secure the information that they have been taught. Pupils struggle to retain and recall important knowledge when they need it.

The school does not support pupils with SEND to achieve well. Learning targets and support strategies are generic. They often fail to address pupils' specific barriers to learning. The information that the school provides to teachers does not help them to adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs. As a result, these pupils do not understand what they have been taught. They are unable to complete learning activities. Pupils with SEND do not learn the important information that is set out in the curriculum.

The school has made reading a priority. However, this work is not having enough impact. This is because the school has not ensured that enough staff are appropriately trained to fully implement important new strategies. This means that pupils who struggle to read do

not receive support that is refined enough to meet their needs. As a result, these pupils do not catch up as quickly as they should.

A significant number of pupils do not place value on the well-constructed personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme. Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 are taught about key topics, such as respect and tolerance. In this respect, pupils have the knowledge that they need to live in modern society. However, some pupils do not understand or exhibit these principles. Adults do not consistently challenge disrespectful and hurtful behaviour. This leads to a culture where racial, homophobic and prejudicial language is normal. Girls are routinely discriminated against and intimidated by boys. Some pupils refuse to report incidents because they lack faith in the school to resolve issues and to help them. Pupils feel unsafe and do not find school an enjoyable experience. The school has not extended the PSHE programme into the sixth form. Consequently, students in the sixth form do not have a secure understanding of the knowledge that they need as they move on beyond school.

A considerable number of pupils do not have a positive attitude to their learning. They disengage from learning and do not take pride in their work. Classrooms appear calm and quiet, but many pupils are not actively participating in learning. Too many pupils miss school too often. The school has begun to take action to address high absence levels. This is beginning to have an impact. Some pupils are attending school more regularly than they did in the past.

Students in the sixth form have begun to benefit from some improvements to this part of the school. Students' attendance is better than it was. They are beginning to take advantage of the additional opportunities that they have to contribute to the life of the school. However, many of these changes have only just been implemented. They have not had time to change the culture and undo the endemic weaknesses in the sixth form.

The school offers a broad range of opportunities for pupils to develop their interests and talents. These include sports, performance and general interest clubs. The school offers elite academies for pupils in sport and performance. This helps those pupils with exceptional talent to realise their ambitions. Pupils access a strong careers programme. All pupils in Years 11 and 13, and pupils with SEND, benefit from one-to-one interviews. Pupils in all year groups access a breadth of information about different courses and providers. This helps pupils make informed choices about their futures.

Many staff feel that the school engages with them to consider how strategies to secure improvement may impact on their workload. However, some also believe that too many initiatives are implemented at the same time.

The school is not aware of the full scale of the weaknesses in the school. This is because its systems for monitoring the impact of improvement strategies are not effective. The school focuses on the implementation of systems and processes. It does not measure the impact of its actions. This lack of understanding means that the school does not understand the underlying reasons for its underperformance. Often the school blames the weaknesses in pupils' attitudes and behaviour on outside influences, rather than the lack

of impact from its own actions. The school's capacity to bring about the required improvements is weak.

Those responsible for governance do not hold the school to account with enough rigour. Too often, they simply accept what they are being told. They do not challenge the school's thinking and actions deeply enough. Members of the trust and the local governing body exacerbate the excuse culture that exists at the school. They have not ensured that the culture at the school has improved so that pupils feel safe and are safe. They have done too little to improve pupils' educational experiences.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The school has not created a culture of safeguarding. It does not consider carefully enough how to protect pupils. The school fails to identify patterns in behaviours that place some pupils or groups of pupils at risk of harm. It does not recognise the scale of the problem. At times, it refuses to accept its own responsibility. It blames and accepts the influence of other factors, rather than considering how it can overcome these challenging circumstances. Girls are at risk of discrimination and harmful sexual behaviour. The school has failed to address this issue. It has not taken appropriate action to protect pupils from harm.

When severe cases of harmful sexual behaviour have been reported, the school does not follow its own well-defined policies and procedures. It records information and maintains detailed and accurate paperwork. However, it does not meet its statutory duties to report cases to the relevant authorities, when needed. It fails in its own risk assessments to protect potential future incidents. Often, victims are not supported with the care and consideration that they should expect. This creates a lack of trust in pupils and a reluctance to report their worries. Consequently, the most vulnerable pupils do not get the support that they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not embedded a strong culture of safeguarding. It does not follow its own policies for reporting safeguarding concerns and supporting pupils when they are at their most vulnerable. In particular, girls, including those in the sixth form, are at risk of harmful sexual behaviours. They do not feel safe. The school and the trust must ensure that all adults follow the expected procedures and report their concerns. The school must make sure that reported concerns are followed up. The school should also ensure that any victim of harmful behaviour is supported and that information that should be passed on to external agencies is done so swiftly.
- Incidents of bullying and discriminatory behaviour are commonplace. Prejudicial language has become normalised as 'banter'. Many cases go unreported because pupils

do not have confidence that staff will act to resolve their concerns. This puts pupils at risk of harm. It also makes school an unpleasant place to be. The school must ensure that they secure a culture, where bullying and discriminatory behaviour are not tolerated. It must ensure that staff are suitably equipped to spot the signs of bullying and discrimination and then act with urgency to tackle such incidents.

- The school does not accurately identify the needs of pupils with SEND. The information that it provides for teachers does not help them effectively adapt their teaching to address pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils with SEND do not learn the important knowledge that the school expects. The school and trust should ensure that the specific barriers to pupils' learning are identified accurately and that teachers have the expertise that they need to adapt their teaching.
- Too often teaching, including in the sixth form, focuses on surface features and what is needed to answer an exam question. This results in pupils not learning the curriculum in the depth they should. Instead, they learn a series of disconnected facts and processes. Consequently, pupils do not learn well. They find it difficult to remember key information they have been taught. The school and the trust should ensure that teaching focuses on enabling pupils to develop a deep understanding of the knowledge identified as being important.
- The school and those responsible for governors do not have an accurate understanding of the scale of the weaknesses at the school. They are too ready to excuse poor behaviour as a result of external factors. Their monitoring systems fail to identify deep-rooted shortcomings. This means that they do not act with sufficient urgency to take the actions that are needed to address these weaknesses. The school and the trust should ensure that their quality assurance processes identify the root cause of the issues in the school and that their improvement strategies are targeted to secure rapid and sustained improvement.
- Those responsible for governance do not hold leaders to account with the necessary level of rigour. This means that they have not challenged the school about weaknesses in pupils' behaviour, safeguarding and the quality of education. Consequently, the trust has not ensured that pupils are safe, free from harassment and supported to achieve well. The trust must ensure that the trust board have the expertise to support and challenge the school to improve.

HMCI strongly recommends that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers. The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspection we carry out.

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	141741
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10371801
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1318
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	216
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Helen Witty
CEO of the trust	Ryan Duff
Headteacher	Matthew Suttanwood
Website	www.chasehigh.org
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 February 2022 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Discovery Educational Trust.
- The headteacher took up his position in October 2023.
- The school uses three registered providers and one unregistered provider of alternative provision.
- 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

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act. 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.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- 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 inspection started on 12 November 2024. It was paused in line with [Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence](#) policy. Inspectors returned on 18 November 2024 to complete the inspection.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteachers, sixth form leader and special educational needs coordinators. The lead inspector also met with the chair of the board of trustees, the chair of the local governing committee and the CEO.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, history and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To further evaluate the curriculum, inspectors reviewed documentation setting out the support for pupils with SEND.
- 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 reviewed a wide range of documents, including, school development plans, policies and documentations related to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses of parents and carers to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for

pupils. Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil at the school.

Inspection team

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