

Southchurch High School

Address: Southchurch Boulevard, Southend-On-Sea, SS2 4XA

Unique reference number (URN): 143144

Inspection report: 24 March 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Most pupils attend school well. While there have been a number of recent improvements, some groups of pupils still miss too much school. Leaders work closely with these pupils. They identify the barriers that impact upon regular school attendance. Leaders work closely and tenaciously with families as well as outside agencies to improve pupils' attendance. When it is helpful to do so, appropriate adjustments are made to support pupils to get back into school regularly. This work has particularly benefited pupils who have found regular school attendance a challenge in the past.

Leaders have significantly improved standards of behaviour. While pupils are not always positive about the school's rules, they see the impact. Staff apply the behaviour policy consistently, from when pupils line up to enter lessons to during learning and when pupils move around the school. The school is notably calm. Low-level disruption is rare. Any incidents of bullying and racist or discriminatory language are dealt with robustly. When the school raised its expectations of behaviour, this led to a significant rise in suspensions and lower attendance. Suspensions have now fallen sharply. This is because pupils know and typically follow the expectations. Pastoral leaders help pupils improve their attitudes and conduct effectively.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders' actions have significantly improved the quality and ambition of the curriculum. They have identified the important knowledge that pupils need. This is taught in the right order so knowledge, including key vocabulary, builds over time. Staff revisit prior learning in a timely manner, which helps pupils remember key content.

The curriculum is taught well. When pupils enter the classroom, they know what to expect. Teachers are highly consistent in how they structure lessons and check pupils' learning. This helps pupils settle quickly to their work. Teachers use skilful approaches to gauge what pupils know and to adjust learning where needed. When pupils have gaps or misconceptions in their knowledge, teachers spot these. They adjust the curriculum to close them. Teachers are ambitious for pupils. They help to extend pupils' thinking and their oracy through activities such as discussion and independent work.

Where needed, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils have effective support put in place that enables them to fully access the curriculum. Where pupils have gaps in important knowledge such as reading, support is precisely targeted and delivered well. This helps pupils to quickly build the reading fluency and confidence that they need.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders understand the barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) may have. Leaders have significantly improved provision for pupils with barriers to learning. They use clear and effective systems

that identify these barriers. External experts provide additional support and guidance where needed. Pupils receive precise support from pastoral and specialist staff. This helps pupils to access learning in school. Staff receive the training they need. Teachers understand the needs of pupils in their classes. They support them well. Effective approaches to how the curriculum is adapted helps pupils with SEND to access the curriculum successfully.

Leaders check how pupils with barriers to learning attend, achieve and feel. They review their progress and put in place support for them to improve further. Leaders track how well pupils make use of the opportunities on offer. Leaders use additional funding from the pupil premium grant to ensure that disadvantaged pupils benefit from wider opportunities. Staff work closely with outside agencies such as headteachers of the virtual school to best support looked-after children. Leaders choose suitable alternative provisions so that pupils who attend these gain important skills and can increasingly access learning in school.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have taken highly effective action to improve the quality of provision for pupils. They and the trust have ensured that priorities have been correctly identified and rigorously addressed. Leaders have used a range of expertise and support from within and beyond the trust to ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to carry out their roles well. Staff value this training and typically state that leaders are considerate of their wellbeing and workload.

Leaders have worked with purpose to improve behaviour, ensuring that the school is calm and lessons are purposeful. Initially, some parents, carers and pupils did not agree with the changes to the school's behaviour policy. Some pupils left the school as a result or did not attend as well as they should. Since establishing the behaviour policy, parents, pupils and staff appreciate the impact this has made. There have been significant improvements to pupils' behaviour and their readiness to learn.

Trustees and governors know the school well and provide robust challenge. For instance, they check that procedures to keep children safe remain effective. Staff's tenacious work helps pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to access the curriculum successfully. It also ensures that they are fully involved in the range of opportunities that the school provides. Leaders at all levels have high ambitions for pupils. Leaders know that there is further work to do and are working quickly to ensure that pupils' achievement improves.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that the school's personal development programme is relevant and engaging. Pupils learn how to be a good citizen. They learn about current affairs and how democracy works. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and consent. They are taught how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy and safe. Pupils learn about the local context, such as dangers on railway lines. Well-chosen visitors provide expert information and share their experiences. Older pupils learn about the dangers of serious youth violence and the personal and legal impact of poor choices. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures and the importance of equality. This is reflected in how pupils treat each other positively.

Pupils develop their interests and social skills when they attend the many clubs on offer, including gardening, badminton and Formula One. The school ensures that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, attend trips, including overseas. Pupils enhance their learning through well-chosen visits, such as to the theatre and museums. Pupils build their confidence and skills through the increasing number of leadership roles on offer or through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. When pupils need support with their wellbeing, pastoral staff provide them with the help they need.

The school's careers education programme is comprehensive. Pupils receive individual guidance. This helps them make informed choices about their next steps. The number of pupils who progress on to education, employment or training has increased over time. Most pupils gain first-hand experience of work. They encounter a range of employers and further education providers. This helps to raise pupils' aspirations.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

While pupils studying vocational courses typically achieve well, in other subjects pupils have not progressed well enough across the curriculum. At the end of key stage 4, too many pupils left school without the important knowledge they should have across a range of subjects. This has been the case for a number of years and has limited the opportunities open to some pupils when they leave school.

Leaders have worked effectively to identify and address the key underlying issues that have contributed to pupils' achievement being typically below the national averages. Improvements to the curriculum and teaching, coupled with pupils' dedication to learning, mean that pupils currently at the school generally acquire the knowledge they need. Pupils remember and can do more. This is reflected in the positive quality of work in their books. Leaders have started work to develop pupils' oracy skills and rightly identify this as an aspect of continuing focus.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils at Southchurch High School describe how the school has improved significantly in recent years. In the past, the curriculum was not effective. Pupils experienced regular disruption to their learning. Pupils now benefit from a well-thought-out curriculum. This is taught well. Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved, and they are increasingly engaged in their activities. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have effective support put in place that enables them to access the curriculum. Although pupils currently at the school progress well through the curriculum, over time, too many pupils have left key stage 4 without the knowledge and skills they need to be well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Most pupils attend school regularly. Leaders have established consistently high expectations of pupils' conduct. Changes to the school's behaviour policy and routines were not initially received well by some parents, carers and pupils. However, the school is a safe, very calm and purposeful place for pupils to learn. Most pupils meet the expectations of staff and conduct themselves sensibly and politely. Pupils treat each other and staff with respect. When incidents of bullying occur, leaders deal with them effectively.

The school provides frequent opportunities for pupils to broaden their interests. Many pupils attend a range of clubs. They take part in a growing range of educational trips, such as to the theatre. Pupils build their confidence when they participate in opportunities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The engaging careers programme raises pupils' aspirations. Pupils encounter a range of employers and further education providers, gaining first-hand experience of work. They receive the information they need to make informed choices about their next steps. Pupils learn about the importance of diversity and how to keep themselves safe online.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff develop high levels of confidence and expertise so they consistently enhance the opportunities and experiences of pupils who have barriers to learning.
 - Leaders should refine and embed their work on oracy to further develop pupils' confidence and ability to communicate well.
 - Leaders should further broaden the range and quality of opportunities, both within the curriculum and beyond it, for pupils to develop their independence, self-motivation and resilience.
 - Leaders should ensure that pupils typically achieve in line or above the national averages in exams at the end of key stage 4.
 - Leaders should refine their strategic work around attendance so that the attendance of all groups of pupils improves further.
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About this inspection

Southchurch High School is a member of the Partnership Learning multi-academy trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Saadat (Sid) Mubashar. The chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust is Roger Leighton.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

The inspection team spoke with school and trust leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator. They also held discussions with representatives of the trust board, the

local governing body and the CEO. Inspectors also spoke to leaders at other provisions that work with the school's looked-after pupils and those attending alternative provision. Inspectors spoke to staff and pupils. The lead inspector also spoke to an advisor appointed by the Department for Education. 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 and pupil questionnaires.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

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.

The school makes use of 4 alternative provisions, all of which are unregistered.

Headteacher: Tracy Airoll

Lead inspector:

Steve Woodley, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

James Shapland, Ofsted Inspector

Aimee Bray, Ofsted Inspector

Martin Campbell, Ofsted Inspector

Tom Sparks, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 24 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

805

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

840

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

44.97%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.48%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

19.50%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	23.6%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	13.3%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	23.0%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	38.7	46.0	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	34.2	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	37.5	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.72	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.81	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	10.4%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	7.5%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	15.0%	25.2%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	32.7	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	30.8	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	30.8	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-1.04	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.20	-0.57	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	10.4%	53.1%	-42.7 pp
2023/24 (final)	7.5%	53.1%	-45.7 pp
2022/23 (final)	15.0%	52.4%	-37.4 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	32.7	50.4	-17.7
2023/24 (final)	30.8	50.0	-19.3
2022/23 (final)	30.8	50.3	-19.5

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-1.04	0.16	-1.20
2022/23 (final)	-1.20	0.17	-1.37

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	86%	91%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	93%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	83%	94%	Below

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	9.4%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	9.7%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	10.9%	9.0%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	28.6%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	32.8%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	35.6%	26.5%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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