

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Sullivan Centre

Boulevard, 172 Boulevard, Hull, East Yorkshire HU3 3EL

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 May 2025

Outcome

The Sullivan Centre has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The principal of this school is Katie Troake. This school is part of the Venn Academy 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), Dr Simon Witham, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Terry Johnson. There is also an executive principal, Claire Goodaire, who is responsible for this school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is a place of well-founded hope and transformation. All key strands of its excellent work are woven together superbly which helps pupils who are often at their most vulnerable. These build carefully on the school's values of 'safety, success and strength', which are lived by staff and pupils alike.

The school holds high aspirations for the pupils when they cannot do this for themselves. Staff help pupils towards a successful return to a mainstream school or another setting when possible. This is evident across all aspects of the school's work. Pupils are individually supported to make their best next step, with strong staff expertise and collaboration that make this happen. Pupils who complete their time at The Sullivan Centre site, achieve high-quality qualifications, often exceeding their own expectations.

Pupils have very strong and positive relationships with staff who they know want the very best for them. They feel safe and valued. Pupils know that they can turn to staff for personal support, and they do so. Pupils enjoy the excellent range of opportunities that help them engage with the wider world. For example, their horizons are widened by the regular Friday enrichment afternoons and engagement with high quality careers activities.

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

Pupils receive an excellent-quality education. The school's high ambition and impact are evident in each area of its work. There is always careful consideration of pupils' background, current situation and additional needs. For example, the stages of the curriculum design allow staff the framework in which to engage pupils in deeply meaningful education, whilst catering to their medical situation which can be complex. Since the pandemic, the school has increasingly supported pupils with mental health needs.

There is a great calmness and assurance in how staff work with pupils. Pupils are known and understood very well. This allows staff to anticipate where they are going to need help and support. Learning is carefully organised and implemented effectively to help overcome barriers and support pupils with their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The provision for pupils with SEND is a significant strength. Pupils' needs are identified and assessed clearly, have their learning supported superbly and they therefore succeed well.

Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to their learning. They receive highly effective support to help them understand themselves and their own feelings. Over time, pupils attend more often and benefit from increased engagement with the curriculum and their peers. The school makes effective use of attendance information to support pupils. Staff rebuild pupils' confidence through a range of pastoral support. Skilful practitioners help pupils very effectively. Staff collectively use the school's shared common framework around executive function to praise and monitor pupils' development. Pupils make significant gains from both their learning and by being part of the school community.

Reading is central to the school's work and pupils are steeped in rich literary environment. They develop a deep love of reading. Pupils at the earliest stages of reading, regardless of their age or medical situation, receive well-considered help to either keep-up or catch-up effectively. Staff encourage pupils to discuss and share their ideas in lessons. Teachers shape the curriculum in responsive ways to address any gaps in pupils' understanding from the disruption that they have experienced to their education. There is careful use of information about pupils' learning to help them make progress, often despite pauses or disruption to their time in school.

There is careful integration of wider experiences into the curriculum. Pupils are supported highly effectively to recover from their fractured experiences through personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons and inspiring trips. For example, pupils watch plays connected to their English work and benefit from various therapeutic encounters with animals. These allow pupils to grow in their own aspirations and realise what is possible for them. Pupils take up 'ambassador roles' for the school and enjoy them greatly. The work to support pupils understanding of future careers paths and their transition to those next steps is strong.

Leaders at all levels are strategic and wholeheartedly ambitious for those in their care. They have created a culture which is wholesomely inclusive. Staff feel exceptionally well supported and they are proud of the difference they make to pupils' lives. Parents and carers talk highly of the support and education that their children receive and how their lives have been changed. Close constructive working relationships exist with health colleagues. This ensures that details about any needs and safeguarding information are well shared to support the great numbers of pupils encountered.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in June 2019.

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	142258
Local authority	Kingston Upon Hull City Council
Inspection number	10346562
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	41
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Terry Johnson
CEO of the trust	Dr Simon Witham
Principal	Katie Troake
Website	www.thesullivancentre.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of Venn Academy Trust.
- The school provides education based at three locations. One is situated on the paediatric wards at Hull Royal Infirmary and another at the in-patient Inspire Unit, where most pupils are on very short-term admissions. The third location is The Sullivan Centre, where most pupils stay for longer and are in key stage 3 and 4.
- The school also supports pupils through home tuition, in person and online.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school is actively planning for further expansion and relocation of The Sullivan Centre provision to an adjoining site in the very near future.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the executive principal, principal and other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with the CEO, trust staff, trustees, including the chair of trustees and the chair of governors. An inspector spoke to representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors visited all three sites that the school runs.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum, visited lessons and spoke with leaders.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to behaviour, bullying and attendance.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including leaders' plans to improve the school and their self-evaluation of the school's work.
- Inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted's staff survey, as well as Ofsted's parent survey, Parent View, including free-text responses. An inspector also met with a small group of parents.

Inspection team

Richard Wakefield, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tracy Millard

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025