

South Shore Academy

St Anne's Road, Blackpool, Lancashire FY4 2AR

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- There are wide variations in the quality of teaching across the school. Small pockets of inadequate teaching remain in a few subject departments.
- Teachers are developing their skills to meet the needs of the most able pupils in lessons. However, the progress these pupils make across the school is not securely good.
- Although improving, disadvantaged pupils make less progress than other pupils do, including in English and mathematics.
- Not all subject departments have kept pace with the wider improvements to the curriculum and teaching in the school. This is particularly the case with modern languages.
- Despite sustained improvements to pupils' overall attendance, the number of pupils who regularly miss school remains too high.
- Pupils' generally behave well under the direct supervision of adults. They are not yet demonstrating independently positive attitudes to learning.
- Leaders' strategies to improve all aspects of the school's work have reduced but not eliminated some of the important differences in the quality of teaching, and in the progress and behaviour of pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have turned this school round through sheer grit and determination. Their combined focus has improved all aspects of the school's work.
- There are significant strengths in the teaching and progress of pupils in a number of subjects. This is particularly the case in English, mathematics, history and geography.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of issues that might affect their personal welfare are very effective.
- Pupils are proud of the school and recognise that behaviour is much improved. They identify it as a safe place to be, and one that respects individual differences.
- The local governing body performs its function well. Governors are highly committed to ensuring long-term improvements to the school.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and by this raise achievement, particularly for disadvantaged pupils by:
 - eradicating the small pockets of inadequate teaching in the school
 - urgently and substantially addressing the weaknesses in the curriculum and delivery of those weaker subjects, including modern languages
 - using the best practice in the school to increase teachers' skills in effectively planning learning for all groups of pupils, but particularly the most able
 - ensuring that all teachers secure good behaviour from their pupils, so that learning is rarely interrupted by low-level disruption.
- Increase pupils' appreciation of the impact their own behaviour and attitudes to learning have on the progress they make.
- Continue to work with pupils and their families to improve the attendance of those who fail to attend school regularly.
- Increase the effectiveness and impact of all subject leaders by ensuring that they develop a comprehensive understanding of the quality of education in their departments.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have tackled shortfalls in the quality of teaching, and they continue to provide staff with tailored packages of support and challenge. Despite this, some inadequate teaching remains and the strong practice that exists in the school has not been spread effectively enough.
- Not all subject leaders are as effective in their posts as those who lead in English, mathematics and, more recently, science. Consequently, the quality of teaching and assessment varies significantly within a few subject departments.
- Leaders have planned a curriculum that reflects their high aspirations for pupils. Proportionally more pupils now study an academic curriculum at key stage 4, rising from about a third of pupils in the current Year 11 to two thirds in the current Year 9. However, the quality of teaching in some of these core departments, such as in modern languages, does not support these ambitions.
- Leaders have designed a curriculum for the most able pupils, the 'challenge' cohort, that is much more suitable to their needs. There are a range of additional, extended projects and seminars to raise aspirations and to enable these pupils to engage in academically rigorous learning. However, leaders have been less successful in ensuring that most-able pupils are getting the right quality of work in lessons.
- The principal and her senior leaders work as a cohesive team to 'fundamentally make a difference'. The impact of their work can be seen in the significant improvements across all areas of the school since it was placed in special measures in May 2015. Teaching, behaviour and attendance have all improved, because accountability has been strengthened. Pupils said that they feel safe and valued. The capacity to improve the school further, is strong.
- Recent appointments to the leadership team have made a significant early impact. Plans to improve both science and the work of the school-wide pastoral and additional needs team are detailed, well judged, and have immediately made a difference.
- Leaders have responded well to the pupil premium review undertaken in 2015. They have a detailed overview of how they allocate pupil premium and catch-up funding. They ensure that all those pupils who are entitled to such support receive it. They are aware that while there are some impact measures in place, their evaluation is not as thorough as it should be. Funding for special educational needs is used effectively. These pupils are well-supported and make good progress in their learning and personal development.
- The school's provision for pupils' social, moral and cultural development is a growing strength. Leaders have invested curriculum time and specialist teaching resources to ensure that pupils know about and develop an appreciation of different religious faiths. They have many opportunities to discuss and reflect on moral and social issues. These prepare pupils well for life in British society.
- The school has been supported effectively by subject leaders from another secondary school within the trust. Their work has contributed to the sustained improvements in English and mathematics. Additionally, the school has worked very effectively with a

partner primary school, also from the trust. This has significantly improved teachers' understanding of the skills pupils gain through the new primary curriculum for English.

Governance of the school

- The local governing body comprises a small group of highly committed, conscientious individuals who understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They have strengthened their leadership of the school through careful appointments, for example with governors who have experience in education, finance and human resources. They are well placed to hold leaders to account and provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge.
- Governors act strategically. They ensure that the focus of financial spending is on improving leadership at all levels of the school to sustain improvements.
- The records of meetings of the governing body demonstrate that these focus on the right areas for discussion. Governors regularly ask key members of the leadership team and subject leaders to provide them with updates on the impact of their work. They have increased their monitoring systems by asking to see first-hand evidence of improvements, for example by looking at pupils' work in science.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has a high number of pupils who require careful support and monitoring, including many pupils who have involvement with social services. Staff work assiduously with external agencies to ensure that these pupils are protected and they make early interventions when required. The attendance of these pupils is carefully monitored and first-day absence actions are robustly undertaken.
- Records show that staff are highly alert to any safeguarding concerns and make frequent referrals to the school's lead for safeguarding. These are meticulously recorded and acted upon.
- The school employs a number of counsellors and invests in programmes to help pupils who have mental health difficulties or who need to be more resilient in order to deal with the many challenges in their lives. The 'Right to Succeed' project has trained staff and worked, initially with Year 11 pupils, to strengthen their mental toughness. The impact of this work is considerable. Inspectors observed a maturity in the learning and behaviours of older pupils who stay for extra classes after school and whose attendance remains in line with the rest of the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies significantly across the school. This remains the main reason why pupils fail to maintain consistently strong gains in learning.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers fail to plan learning that builds over time subject-specific skills, knowledge and understanding. Lessons are often out of step with the rigour of the curriculum that is required, for example in GCSE languages. Most-able

pupils are considered in lesson planning but there exists confusion among teaching staff about how best these pupils can be challenged within each subject. Too often, pupils are given a limited amount of subject information and no additional ways to expand upon or deepen it.

- Teachers do not give sufficient consideration to how pupils can and should develop as confident learners through their lessons. Discussions are often superficial as teachers do not encourage pupils to question and analyse subject matter in any depth. In these classes, pupils can become restless and disrupt learning as the work fails to sustain their interest.
- Other teaching is highly effective and pupils make rapid progress, developing secure basic skills and knowledge as well as clearly building understanding over time. This is particularly evident in the humanities, where careful feedback from teachers encourages pupils to redraft work, explain their thinking carefully and bring together different sources of evidence.
- Teachers assess pupils work diligently, in line with the school's policy. Pupils value the feedback they receive and often act on the advice they have been given by improving on their first attempts. This practice is well established across the school.
- Many teachers support pupils' written literacy development well, particularly by paying attention to the correct use of grammar and punctuation. Pupils also enjoy their 'drop everything and read' sessions and inspectors observed many instances when pupils had opportunities to read together in lessons. These strategies are beginning to impact positively on pupils' accuracy in the use of English.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- While pupils generally get on with their learning in class and follow instructions well, they do not positively and independently moderate their own behaviour. There are too few opportunities in class for younger pupils to develop as mature learners. Pupils can often lack confidence in giving responses to questions and contributing to discussions.
- Pupils report that they feel safe in school. They are well aware of issues relating to online safety and sexting. The school's personal, social and health education curriculum also teaches pupils about other risks that are common in the local community, such as sexual exploitation, alcoholism and domestic violence. Leaders promote an open and honest approach to these issues, and pupils clearly feel able to report concerns to teachers and support staff.
- Pupils speak positively about how inclusive the school is and how adults promote respect for individuals. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) matters are discussed openly and thoroughly, and pupils have confidently 'come out' or raised gender issues and describe how well supported they have been by pupils and adults alike.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' low-level disruption in lessons sometimes impedes learning for others. This is particularly the case for younger pupils.
- Overall attendance has improved term on term over the last two years. However, there is still a sizeable group of disadvantaged pupils who regularly miss school. This is reducing, but slowly.
- Too many pupils are late to school in the morning and require their teachers to check their uniform before they get to their form rooms. Pupils do not all take full responsibility for their behaviour, or act maturely in corridors in between lessons.
- Pupils respond well to interventions and outright disrespectful behaviour is very rare. Few pupils are excluded, and then for only short periods of time. Those pupils who access provision in 'The Bridge' (see below) work hard and the majority reintegrate back into their classes. Relationships between pupils and staff are, on the whole, very positive.
- Pupils and teachers all agree that behaviour has improved significantly since the previous inspection.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Achievement is rising for all groups of pupils across the school because, in the main, teaching has improved across the majority of subject areas and pupils are more ready to learn. However, gaps in progress and attainment exist for disadvantaged pupils and most-able pupils do not reach the high standards of which they are capable.
- Most-able pupils have underachieved in the past and are not making rapid enough progress in order to reach the highest grades by the end of key stage 4. While they are a focus group in each lesson, many teachers struggle to understand how to develop learning activities and to provide resources that will really deepen these pupils' subject understanding and develop critical skills of analysis and reasoning.
- Disadvantaged pupils, particularly those of middle and high ability, continue to make variable progress across the school and across a range of subjects. In many cases, this is because pupils have gaps in their learning due to previous poor or erratic attendance. However, progress for these pupils is improving. This is in no small measure due to the extensive offer of additional, tailored classes at the end of the school day. These and other effective interventions, designed to encourage regular attendance and supported through pupil premium funding, build resilience and raise pupils' confidence.
- The school's systems for tracking the progress of pupils educated off-site or within their internal support bases is a renewed school priority. Those pupils educated at 'The Bridge' largely effectively re-integrate into mainstream classes. Others at 'The Boathouse' are effectively supported in order to prevent them from being excluded. A small number of pupils, for whom mainstream schooling is not appropriate, are educated in conjunction with Blackpool's specialist education services. Leaders identify

that the success of this has been mixed.

- There are wide variations in the effectiveness of some subject departments. Pupils lack confidence in speaking in other languages. The lack of core skills in current Year 10 pupils' performance in French and Spanish demonstrates that they have underachieved over quite some time. In science, recent significant improvements to leadership and teaching mean that pupils are now making acceptable progress, particularly with the newly designed curriculum in Year 8.
- Pupils of all prior ability groups are making greater progress in English and mathematics. Pupils in the current Year 11 are set to reach higher standards in these subjects than was previously the case.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those pupils of low prior ability, are supported well in the school and teachers know how to meet their needs effectively. As a result, they make good progress in developing basic skills and achieve well across most subjects.
- Pupils who join the school with literacy skills below what is expected for their age, receive highly effective support. A primary school teacher works with a member of the English department to ensure that these pupils make rapid gains in this subject. However, this has not been extended into mathematics.

School details

Unique reference number	140021
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10025869

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	730
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Len Hampson
Principal	Jane Bailey
Telephone number	01253 345522
Website	southshoreacademy.co.uk/
Email address	admin@southshore.blackpool.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 May 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards.
- The school is sponsored by Bright Futures Educational Trust.
- The school accesses 'Educational Diversity', Blackpool's pupil referral unit, including 'Athena', the home and hospital education service. The school also operates 'The Boathouse', an off-site provision for pupils who are at risk of exclusion, and 'The Bridge', an on-site base for pupils reintegrating back into school life.
- The Bright Futures Educational Trust brokers support to the academy in the form of Specialist Leaders of Education from Altrincham Grammar School for Girls, which is a

National Teaching School.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 parts of lessons and scrutinised pupils' work from across a range of subjects. Many lessons were observed with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also evaluated learning alongside subject leaders in English, mathematics and science.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons and during social times and spoke formally to three groups of pupils about their experiences in the school. They considered the feedback pupils have given to the school about what they think about learning and behaviour.
- Inspectors met with all members of the leadership team to discuss the effectiveness of the school's provision. The lead inspector also met with three governors, including the chair of the local governing body and with the chief executive officer of the school's sponsor.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of information in relation to the curriculum, the quality of leadership and safeguarding. This included the record of checks made on staff before they take up post and the systems and documentation in place for making child protection referrals. The lead inspector also checked on the safeguarding arrangements for those pupils educated off-site, which included a visit to 'The Boathouse'.
- There were too few responses to 'Parent View', Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. However, inspectors considered the views of 15 parents who wrote directly to the lead inspector during the inspection.

Inspection team

Philippa Darley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jackie Cahalin	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Ofsted Inspector

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