

Inspection of Chaucer School

Wordsworth Avenue, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S5 8NH

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Over time, leaders have been unable to bring about the necessary improvements needed to ensure pupils learn in a calm and respectful environment. On a daily basis, pupils face considerable disruption to their learning. The quality of the curriculum and how it is taught is stronger, although this still needs to improve.

Pupils' experiences at school vary considerably. The school's behaviour policy is not used consistently by staff. Many pupils and staff who responded to the inspection questionnaires said that poor behaviour is commonplace among pupils. Inspectors agree. Some pupils do not feel safe. Some pupils do not have confidence in staff to sort out issues such as bullying and inappropriate language effectively.

Leaders have started to refine some aspects of the curriculum in subjects such as mathematics and art. The content and knowledge pupils learn is well thought out. However, there are some subjects, such as English and science, where the curriculum requires more attention and consideration to allow pupils to learn well.

Opportunities for pupils to develop personally are limited. Pupils do not benefit from a wide range of experiences. Many are not taught to respect other faiths and cultures in sufficient depth.

In general, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs met. Leaders and staff ensure the most vulnerable pupils receive additional mentoring to help to raise their aspirations and understanding of the world of work.

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

Leaders have not acted swiftly enough to improve, or respond to, significant weaknesses in the school. While new leaders are starting to prioritise the right things, there are too many shortcomings in the school that require urgent improvement.

Outside of lessons, pupils' behaviour is particularly poor. During social times, some pupils use physical contact or foul language and disrespect staff. In discussions with inspectors, some pupils described fighting and boisterous behaviour as commonplace. Some staff say that they do not feel supported by leaders when faced with challenging behaviour. The school's own records highlight that the proportion of pupils receiving a suspension for poor behaviour is high. Although recently reducing, the number of pupils that are removed from lessons for poor behaviour also remains high.

Rates of absence and persistent absence are high. As a result, leaders have started to review and respond to attendance information more closely. Despite this, rates of attendance continue to be a cause for concern.

In some subjects, including science and English, leaders have not considered in detail what pupils should learn and when. Additionally, across the school, teachers' use of assessment is not consistently effective. Some staff do not have a clear understanding of what pupils do well and/or how pupils can improve. This leads to gaps in pupils' understanding that are not addressed with sufficient urgency. When pupils try to learn more-complex ideas, they do not have the basic knowledge to enable them to learn well.

Pupils are not well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils have a limited understanding of major world religions. This is because the personal development of pupils has not been prioritised over time. The current delivery of the curriculum is not allowing pupils sufficient opportunities to develop their understanding of fundamental British values. Until recently, opportunities for pupils to learn how to play an active role in society were limited.

More-recent strategies, designed to help improve pupils' reading fluency, are starting to have a positive effect on pupils' use of subject-specific vocabulary. Activities such as the 'big read', used successfully in geography and art, are now being introduced in other subjects. Pupils who continue to need support with their reading receive extra help from staff. This is having a positive impact.

Pupils have the opportunity to learn about different careers and explore their potential next steps in education, employment or training. The requirements of the Baker Clause are met. The Baker Clause requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. Pupils in Year 8 and above benefit from impartial careers advice and guidance.

Pupils with SEND experience similar shortcomings related to the curriculum as their peers. However, staff understand the learning needs of these pupils well. Teachers and support staff work well together to adapt lessons to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. They use pupils' education, health and care plans to ensure pupils receive the support they are entitled to. Leaders with responsibility for SEND provision provide regular updates and training for staff.

Teachers, including those at the early stages of their career, generally feel well supported by leaders. Most staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire said that leaders use professional development to encourage, challenge and support their improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff at the school understand the range of factors which may put pupils at risk. Leaders have put in place effective systems and processes for raising and monitoring safeguarding concerns. There is clear communication with parents and external agencies where required.

Leaders work closely with pupils who, historically, have not attended school regularly. This includes frequent home visits to support pupils, ensure they are accounted for and to provide them with the support they need to attend well. Leaders have had some success in this regard, although rates of absence remain too high.

Staff meet frequently to review safeguarding cases and plan appropriate interventions to support pupils. Leaders seek external counselling and mentoring for vulnerable pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have been unable to bring about the necessary improvements needed at the school. For too long, aspects of the school's work such as pupils' behaviour and the curriculum they study have not been reviewed with precision and urgency so that leaders know exactly where the problems lie. Leaders must ensure that there is capacity in the leadership team and trust board to address the many areas of weakness at the school. Leaders at all levels must ensure they have the necessary training, skills and time to swiftly improve pupils' behaviour, personal development and the quality of education that pupils receive.
- Across the school, the planning and implementation of the curriculum is variable. This, in part, means that pupils learn new knowledge in an unstructured way. Some pupils find it difficult to recall what they have been taught or learn new content as well as they might. Leaders must ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is sufficiently detailed and appropriately sequenced so that pupils remember their learning over longer periods of time.
- The standard of behaviour is inadequate. The school's behaviour policy is not applied consistently or effectively by all staff. Staff and pupils do not feel pupils' behaviour is managed well. Leaders must ensure that staff receive appropriate training to better understand the school's behaviour policy. Furthermore, staff should ensure they consistently apply the policy, ensuring pupils' behaviour is of a high standard.
- The personal development curriculum is not providing pupils with a wide, rich set of experiences. As a result, some pupils' understanding of British values, other faiths and cultures is weak. This means that some pupils are not prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders must ensure the personal development curriculum is strengthened and given prominence in the school, and that staff are trained to provide a clear emphasis on these important aspects.
- Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that leaders and those responsible for governance may appoint early career teachers.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138414
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10229103
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	841
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Draper
Headteacher	Joanna Crewe
Website	www.chaucer.sheffield.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- In September 2021, the school appointed a new head of school.
- The school is part of the Tapton School Academy Trust.
- The school uses five alternative providers. A small number of pupils attend these providers.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and representatives of the trust. They spoke to teaching and support staff. One inspector met with teachers who are in the early stages of their careers.
- Deep dives were carried out in English, mathematics, science, geography and art. Inspectors spoke with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at books and spoke to both pupils and staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the local governing body and the chair of the trust.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including checks made on all adults who come on to the school site. Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff to evaluate their understanding of safeguarding procedures. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader to evaluate their work to keep pupils safe in school.
- An inspector visited one of the alternative providers used by the school. Safeguarding, curriculum and attendance procedures were reviewed.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

John Linkins, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Chris Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Clark	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Horn	Ofsted Inspector
David Milligan	Her Majesty's Inspector

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