

Inspection of a good school: South Bank University Academy

Trafalgar Street, London SE17 2TP

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 June 2022

Outcome

South Bank University Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are safe and well cared for. They enjoy coming to school and like the strong sense of community. Pupils understand the school values of social justice, endeavour, kindness and know why these are important.

Leaders have high expectations for behaviour and make sure everyone is treated fairly. Pupils are considerate towards one another. Bullying is rare. When it happens, pupils said that leaders work with them to sort out any issues quickly.

Staff know their pupils well and encourage them to do their best. Pupils value the academic opportunities provided for them. They work hard in lessons. Pupils are resilient and determined even when they find work challenging.

Pupils take part in activities that help to extend their learning. The school uses its strong links with business and industry partners. For example, pupils in Year 10 take part in events that help to develop their enterprise and employability skills.

Sixth-form students are mature role models and act as mentors for younger pupils. They support other pupils to develop leadership skills. Pupils said the training helps them to develop self-confidence when speaking in public.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum which all pupils can access. Leaders ensure that learning engages and sustains pupils' interests. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 study a wide range of subjects, including computer science and the performing arts. Leaders have plans in place to address the low uptake of languages at GCSE. They have started to provide pupils with more opportunities to study Spanish at GCSE.

Leaders identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They make sure that staff use effective strategies to support these pupils. Pupils who need help with their reading get extra support to help them become fluent readers.

In most subjects, leaders consider the important knowledge pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn it. However, in mathematics, leaders do not think about this carefully. The curriculum in mathematics is not delivered in a logical way. This hinders pupils' achievement in mathematics. Leaders are aware of this and have taken steps to address this.

Staff find interesting ways to deliver the curriculum. For example, when pupils in Year 9 learn about plant habitats in science, they develop their own garden patch. Pupils design experiments to find out about factors affecting the rate of plant growth. This helps pupils to take responsibility and develop their independence.

In many subjects, pupils have opportunities to use their prior learning to help them with new learning. For example, in English, pupils in Year 11 used what they knew about persuasive writing techniques to understand how writers use language to convey their viewpoints. In Spanish, pupils in Year 8 practised frequently-used words to help them build new sentences.

In a few subjects, staff do not check carefully what pupils have learned. This means that they have not identified where pupils' knowledge is less secure. This is particularly the case in Years 7 to 9. Pupils struggle to remember essential knowledge with accuracy and have not understood some important concepts that they have been taught.

Pupils are keen to succeed and find joy in learning new things. They can focus on their learning because low-level disruption in lessons is rare. Staff are swift to tackle any poor behaviour.

Staff help pupils to understand life in modern Britain. Pupils are taught about what it means to be a responsible citizen. Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities made available to them. They take part in a range of fundraising events for local charities. Pupils spoke about their social responsibility to work for the good of other people.

The majority of pupils stay at the school and continue their studies at the sixth form. They appreciate the varied post-16 offer. Teachers give pupils helpful support on how to apply to university and apprenticeships. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education. They make informed choices at important stages, such as at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.

Leaders are considerate of staff well-being. Staff appreciate leaders' actions to support them with their workload. Governors know the school well and effectively work with leaders to make changes to the curriculum where it is needed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained to identify any concerns. They act swiftly whenever there are safeguarding issues. Leaders work effectively with external partners such as the local authority to refer pupils and families for early help.

Pupils know how to stay safe, including online. They receive age-appropriate lessons on issues around consent and sexual harassment. Pupils know where to find help if they need it. Leaders arrange a variety of well-being services at school, including support with mental health.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in mathematics is not well planned and sequenced. Subject content is not taught in a logical order to help pupils build up their knowledge and skills over time. This affects pupils' learning. Leaders have begun to address this. Leaders should continue to support teachers to plan and deliver a coherently sequenced mathematics curriculum.
- In a few subjects, staff do not ensure that pupils learn and remember important knowledge. They do not identify and address misconceptions. This means that occasionally pupils' knowledge and understanding are not secure. Leaders should ensure that staff address any gaps in pupils' knowledge and use effective strategies to help pupils learn essential knowledge.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2017.

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	140221
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	10226949
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	711
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	139
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Chris Mallaband
Principal	John Taylor
Website	www.southbankua.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 and 10 May 2017

Information about this school

- Leaders use one registered alternative provider for their pupils.
- The current principal took up the post in September 2017.
- The number of pupils has significantly increased since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This is the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the executive principal, principal, two vice principals and other senior leaders. Inspectors met with five members of the local governing body, including

the chair of governors. They also spoke to the independent school improvement adviser.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, music and Spanish. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Through discussion with leaders, governors, pupils and staff, inspectors considered the effectiveness of safeguarding. They also looked at records relating to safeguarding, including pre-employment checks carried out before appointing staff.
- Inspectors met with different groups of pupils and spoke to pupils around the school to consider their views on the school. Inspectors considered the well-being and behaviour of pupils during lesson visits and around the school.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including early career teachers and support staff, about behaviour and workload in the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Parent View and free-text responses from parents and carers. They also took account of the responses from staff and pupils to the Ofsted surveys.

Inspection team

Ogugua Okolo-Angus, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

Katerina Christodoulou, team inspector Ofsted Inspector

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