

Union works with school over report

THE National Education Union (NEU) has admitted issues at Chase High School are “extremely concerning” and is working with staff to address issues they are facing.

Following the publication of the report yesterday, the NEU has said it is communication with staff to ensure they have the guidance necessary to tackle the issues.

A spokesman said: “The findings in the Ofsted report on Chase High School are extremely concerning, particularly regarding safeguarding, discrimination and the overall school culture. Every student deserves to feel safe in their learning environment, and no member of staff should have to work in conditions where these issues are left unaddressed.

“While any specific details regarding safeguarding incidents would need to come from the school itself, the NEU’s priority is to support our members who may be affected by these challenges. We are in contact with staff at Chase High to understand their experiences and ensure they have the guidance and representation they need.

“This report raises broader concerns about the pressures schools are facing, including staff retention, funding cuts and the resources available to implement effective safeguarding policies. Addressing these systemic issues is essential for creating an environment where both students and staff feel safe and supported.”

‘Heavy-handed approach by inspectors’

CHASE High School is not the first south Essex school to complain about Ofsted’s handling of an inspection in recent months.

Back in October, Belfairs Academy, in Leigh, slammed the education watchdog for a “lack of concern for staff wellbeing” following a “requires improvement” rating.

At the time Bev Williams, Principal at the school and CEO at the Legra Academy Trust, revealed that a senior school leader suffered a “severe medical episode” after staff received feedback following the first day of an Ofsted inspection.

The school accused Ofsted of a “heavy-handed approach” by returning to the school to continue the inspection with “five additional inspectors”.

The first day of the inspection, where the senior leader fell ill and was taken to hospital for treatment, was conducted on May 14 before inspectors returned on June 4 for a further two-day inspection.

Ms Williams claims staff were “still severely traumatised” when inspectors returned and wrote to the Chief Inspector of Schools to raise concerns.

The school, which had previously been rated “good” by Ofsted, dropped to “requires improvement” after inspectors ruled the quality of education needed to improve to “secure better outcomes for pupils”.

TEACHERS SAID TO BE LEFT ‘SHAKING AND QUESTIONING CAREERS’

Westcliff school files complaint to Ofsted



■ Under fire - Chase High School



■ Furious - Chase High School’s Matt Suttanwood and Ryan Duff
Image: Chase High School

A SCHOOL in Westcliff has filed a 33-page complaint after experienced teachers were left “shaking and questioning their careers” following a damning Ofsted inspection.

Chase High School, in Prittlewell Chase, has been rated “inadequate” in all areas after inspectors raised major concerns over safety and discrimination.

However, bosses at the school have hit back at Ofsted, claiming the inspection left staff and headteacher Matt Suttanwood “upset, frustrated, and angry” with the conduct of the visit and the report’s content.

The Discovery Educational Trust filed a 33-page complaint, including

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77 documents and 39 staff statements, highlighting “factual errors and judgments based on outdated data”.

This, they claim, contravenes Ofsted’s policy of evaluating a school’s current state rather than its historical performance.

Mr Suttanwood said: “This report does not reflect the experience students, staff, or the community have of Chase. We have been on the upward trajectory for several years.

“I was staggered to be given these views by someone who had been here for two hours, when I walk these corridors every day and do not have the

same experience they have reported.”

The trust has since called in an external consultant to carry out an independent review of the school to give a third-party perspective.

In contrast to the negative report, the school highlights several recent achievements, including being full in every year group, a rise in attendance, and a thriving LGBTQ+ club.

The school also claimed 70 per cent of parents agreed with the statement “the school makes sure pupils are well behaved”, with 73 per cent agreeing with “I would recommend this school to another parent”.

Mr Suttanwood added: “We do not rest on our laurels and our journey

continues in the same way it has been. We continue to put the best interest of our children first.”

“Staff came to me in tears after their meetings with the inspectors. One had pulled a button off his shirt cuff where he had been so anxious during his interview. They have been left questioning their careers.”

As a result of the report’s contents, Mr Suttanwood wrote to all 1,300 parents to ask them to make him aware of any safety issues and claims he received just four replies.

He, and Discovery Educational Trust CEO Ryan Duff, have invited any concerned parents to meet with them this week.

Urgent no-notice inspection from Ofsted

OFSTED has confirmed the inspection carried out at Chase High School, in Westcliff, was an “urgent, no-notice inspection”.

Typically, schools are given a day’s notice prior to inspectors carrying out an inspection.

However, in certain circumstances Ofsted can carry out

an “urgent, no-notice inspection”.

Ofsted may carry out an urgent, unannounced inspection if they believe a child or children are at risk of harm.

This could be in relation to a safeguarding or child protection matter.

The education watchdog con-

firmed to the *Echo* that, despite not commenting on individual inspections, inspectors spent three days at the school for an in-depth inspection, rather than the typical one or two-day inspections.

Ofsted added that all inspection findings are subject to thorough quality assurance

and moderation processes to ensure they are secure prior to their publication.

In relation to the 33-page complaint submitted by the Discovery Educational Trust, on behalf of Chase High School, Ofsted confirmed it will not comment on individual schools or complaints.

WEATHER

TODAY



TOMORROW



FRIDAY



SATURDAY



SUNDAY



TIDES

HARWICH: Today: 11.44am 3.9m. Tomorrow: 12.02am 3.8m, 12.26pm 3.9m
SOUTHEND: Today: 12.38am 5.5m. Tomorrow: 1am 5.5m, 1.15pm 5.6m.

SUNRISE/SET

TODAY: 5.06pm
TOMORROW: 7.16am, 5.08pm

● TRUST FILES 33-PAGE COMPLAINT TO OFSTED AFTER BEING RATED ‘INADEQUATE’

Girls are at ‘risk of harmful sexual behaviour’ at school

GIRLS “do not feel safe” and are at risk of “harmful sexual behaviour” at a school rated inadequate after inspectors found bullying, racial and homophobic discrimination.

Chase High School, in Prittlewell Chase, Westcliff, has been hit with a damning inadequate rating after Ofsted inspectors found pupils do not feel safe and “suffer in silence”.

The school, managed by the Discovery Educational Trust, has now filed a 33-page complaint to Ofsted and staff, including headteacher Matt Sutenwood, say they have been left “upset, frustrated and angry”. Concerns have also been raised about “the way the visit was conducted and the content of the report”.

Following the three-day inspection in November last year, inspectors raised major concerns about children safety – including cases of “harmful sexual behaviour” and the normalisation of discriminatory language as “banter”.

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The report, published yesterday, stated: “Girls are at risk of discrimination and harmful sexual behaviour. The school has failed to address this issue. They lack confidence that adults will help them to resolve their worries.

“Consequently, some pupils do not report incidents of discriminatory behaviour, such as sexual harassment. When severe cases of harmful sexual behaviour have been reported, the school does not follow its own well-defined policies and procedures. This means that it does not support pupils effectively or protect them from harm.”

The school was rated inadequate in all five inspection categories, including quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, leadership and management, as well as sixth-form provision.

Inspectors also highlighted issues with bullying and discriminatory behaviour, and “too many pupils suffering in silence.”

The report added: “Pupils regularly experience bullying, racial, sexual and homophobic discrimination. Discriminatory language in the form of ‘banter’ has become normalised. Many staff do not intervene and challenge pupils when this happens. The school has not identified the extent of the problem, nor has it taken suitable actions to change the culture. Too many pupils continue to suffer in silence.”

At the time of the inspection, there were 1,318 pupils at the school.

Other feedback raised included concerns around the support for pupils with SEND, as well as a lack of understanding around the scale of issues at the school.

This report comes just three years after Chase High School was rated “good” for the first time in 30 years.



■ Dispute - Headteacher Matt Sutenwood and other staff say they were left frustrated and angry by the Ofsted visit and report

Meet
the
Editor



Michael Adkins - Editor

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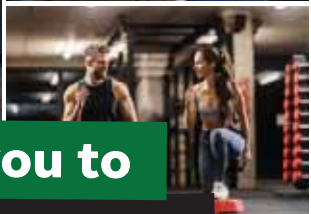
Echo

2025
'YOUR FAVOURITE'
AWARDS
GYM





Vote Form



We now invite you to

vote for your favourite gym from the top 5 nominees

Ringmaster
Boxing Gym,
Leigh

MILO Fitness
Benfleet

Box Daily,
Benfleet

Webbers
Gym,
Benfleet

The Fitness
Lodge,
Leigh

To vote, place a tick in the circle next to your favourite gym and tell us your name below.

Your name:

Postal Address: Your Favourite Gym Vote, 654 The Crescent, Colchester Business Park, Colchester, Essex, CO4 9YQ.

The closing date for all votes to arrive by is Tuesday 25th February 2025

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Echo