

Gateacre School

Hedgefield Road, Gateacre, Liverpool, Merseyside L25 2RW

Inspection dates

3–4 October 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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' rates of progress and attainment have improved since the last inspection. However, too many pupils still do not achieve well enough across a range of subjects.
- The difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally is diminishing but this is not happening quickly enough.
- The quality of teaching varies across the school. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are not routinely challenged to make good progress in their learning.
- Attendance is not good enough. Too many pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are regularly absent from school.
- The headteacher has not had enough time to improve leaders' skills and capacity across the school.
- Not enough priority has been given to improving pupils' literacy, including developing a love of reading.
- A strong programme for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and citizenship exists. However, the quality of teaching of this during tutor time is inconsistent.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's calm, focused and quietly inspirational leadership has transformed the school in the 12 months since he has been in post.
- As a result of his actions, outcomes for pupils, the quality of teaching and behaviour across the school have all improved.
- Members of the interim executive board have supported and challenged the headteacher effectively.
- Pupils benefit from particularly strong teaching in English, art, drama and music. As a result, outcomes for the pupils are consistently high in these subjects.
- Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and friendly. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and based on mutual respect.
- The sixth form is very well led. Students are taught well and they achieve good outcomes.

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 leadership and management by:
 - strengthening leadership skills and capacity across the school to ensure that all leaders' actions are having an impact on outcomes for pupils
 - raising the profile of literacy across the school, including strategies and resources to ensure that reading is promoted more effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by making sure that all teachers:
 - have the highest expectations of what their pupils can achieve
 - provide the right level of challenge, particularly for the most able and key stage 3 pupils
 - use questioning effectively to check and develop pupils' understanding.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by:
 - ensuring that, in all subjects, pupils make at least good progress relative to their starting points
 - building on recent improvements to diminish further the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally
 - ensuring that the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, attain the highest possible grades.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - rapidly increasing pupils' overall attendance rates in all year groups, including the sixth form
 - urgently reducing the number of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, who are regularly absent from school
 - ensuring that all pupils benefit from high-quality teaching in PSHE and citizenship education.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The difference that the headteacher has made to all aspects of the school since taking up his post is remarkable. In a calm and determined manner he has transformed the school over the last 12 months. There is no doubting his genuine commitment to the school and the wider community that it serves. However, he is the first to acknowledge that although they have travelled a considerable distance since the last inspection, there is still a way to go before the quality of education that Gateacre School provides is consistently good.
- The headteacher is quick to point out that it is not just his actions that have brought about the improvements across the school but also those of other leaders. Under his quietly inspirational leadership, many leaders have blossomed. Leaders told inspectors that the headteacher has empowered them to carry out their roles more effectively. He is acutely aware, however, that he has not had enough time to improve leaders' skills and capacity across the school. Not all senior and middle leaders are working strategically enough. They do not all evaluate effectively whether their actions are having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Many teachers have high expectations of and aspirations for their pupils, but leaders have not ensured that this is consistent across the school. Monitoring procedures such as work scrutiny reveal this variability in teachers' levels of expectation and the impact that this has on pupils' progress.
- Leaders have not made it enough of a priority to improve pupils' literacy skills. This was an area for improvement at the last inspection and not enough progress has been made. Teachers are still not providing pupils with enough opportunities to develop their extended writing skills outside of English. Teachers are also not using the school's policy for literacy marking consistently. Although there are different literacy-based activities taking place, this area lacks strategic direction and does not have a high enough profile across the school.
- One of the negative impacts of the severe budget deficit has been the loss of the school library. Reading activities do take place but there is no strategic plan for how reading can be promoted across the school. Pupils' lack of access to books to read at home limits the success of the school's activities to promote a love of reading.
- Historically, leaders did not use the pupil premium funding effectively. The strategic leadership of this area is now greatly improved. Rigorous systems are in place to evaluate whether the way that leaders are using this funding is having a positive impact on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes. Leaders were able to share with inspectors examples of the impact of particular intervention strategies. The pupil premium champion has a strategic overview of all interventions, which are reviewed on a six-weekly cycle. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have improved over the last year but leaders know that more needs to be done to ensure that these pupils make even better progress.
- Last year, the way that leaders used the catch-up funding to support pupils who were behind in their literacy and/or numeracy only had limited success. Less than half of this

cohort of pupils accelerated their progress. Those who still need to catch up are continuing to receive extra support. Twice a week during form time, sixth-formers work with Year 7 pupils who have a low reading age. Over half of the cohort of 18 improved their reading age by the end of the programme.

- The funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively and outcomes for these pupils improved last year. The special educational needs coordinator took up her post at the start of this academic year. She has an accurate understanding of the key strengths and what needs to be done to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make even better progress. Parents were keen to tell inspectors how happy they are with the support that their children receive from the special educational needs coordinator. They are very impressed by the strategies that are put in place to help their children achieve their full potential.
- Senior leaders have an accurate overview of the strengths and areas requiring further improvement in teaching across the school. It is clear that leaders' actions have brought about significant improvements in this area over the last year. Appropriate personalised support is provided for teachers whose teaching is routinely less than good, and leaders provided inspectors with evidence of its impact. Procedures for evaluating teachers' performance are robust. Thorough monitoring systems have now been established that include learning walks, formal observations, work scrutiny and pupils' feedback and outcomes.
- There is a collaborative approach to the leadership of teaching and learning. The school's two specialist leaders in education play a key role in staff training. Leaders are realistic about the impact of training so far. For example, they are aware that the focus on improving the quality of questioning has had more impact in some departments than others. Teachers who spoke to inspectors say that there is now a 'real buzz' about improving teaching across the school.
- Despite the restraints imposed by the deficit budget, the headteacher has ensured that the curriculum is broad and balanced, and takes into account pupils' needs and aspirations. The recent change to the length of lessons has created more opportunities for deeper learning. Fewer transitions between lessons have improved behaviour for learning. Pupils have access to appropriate vocational qualifications, the English baccalaureate and a range of academic qualifications. However, currently the curriculum does not include the option for pupils to study separate sciences and only one modern foreign language is offered.
- Pupils have the opportunity to be involved in a wide range of extra-curricular activities in areas such as drama, music and sport. These enrichment opportunities, alongside an effective programme of assemblies, make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The PSHE and citizenship programme is well designed to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. However, the quality of teaching of this programme in tutor time is variable.
- The headteacher has achieved something very special in the support that he has from the whole school community. Throughout the inspection pupils, parents and staff were keen to tell inspectors of the 'amazing' difference that he has made to Gateacre School.
- Staff feel valued. They speak very positively about the change in culture, beliefs and attitudes since the headteacher's arrival. They feel a greater sense of collaboration,

with everyone working together for the good of the pupils. Teachers say that they feel inspired and motivated because the headteacher has confidence in them.

- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Several parents took the time to share their views with inspectors, one of whom described the 'total change' in the school over the last 12 months. They are particularly complimentary about how accessible the headteacher is, and how well he knows their children. In a recent Year 7 parental survey, all respondents indicated that they would recommend the school to others.
- Pupils share this positivity. All those who spoke with inspectors during the course of the inspection were keen to share their views on how much the school had improved in the last year. They were in no doubt that the headteacher has been the catalyst for this improvement. Leaders believe that pupils' views are important. Displays around the school contain a wealth of information about how positive pupils feel about their learning.
- Leaders understand the importance of pupils making a successful transition from primary to secondary school. Parents and pupils were keen to tell inspectors about their positive experience in moving from Year 6 to Year 7. Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is particularly effective at the point of transition from primary school. Throughout the year, primary pupils are invited into school for a range of events such as science activities, reading and drama workshops and 'maths party day'. Staff and Year 10 pupils have also been into a partner primary school to deliver a learning day. Comments from primary pupils show that they have a delightful time at these events. It is therefore not surprising that more parents are choosing Gateacre School for their children.
- The range of support that the local authority has provided and brokered has contributed to the improvements made since the last inspection. The principal school improvement officer knows the school well and agrees with the school's evaluation of its strengths and areas that still require improvement. She understands the difference that the headteacher has made to the school and the local community and is in no doubt that he has the capacity to lead the school on the next stage of its improvement journey.

Governance of the school

- Following the previous inspection, when the school was judged to require special measures, the local authority replaced the school's governing body with an interim executive board. This board is made up of highly skilled people with a range of relevant experience. They demonstrate a real commitment to the school and the wider community. They have provided effective support and challenge to the headteacher, contributing significantly to the school's rapid improvement in the last year.
- The interim executive board members speak very highly of the exceptional leadership skills of the headteacher. Inspectors agree with the board's assessment that what the school needs now is continuity and stability to embed the strategies that have brought about the recent significant improvements. During the inspection, no evidence was forthcoming that any future academy sponsorship proposals would provide this.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have built on the strengths identified at the safeguarding monitoring inspection last November. Consequently, the work that the school does to keep its pupils safe is of a very high standard.
- All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, including protocols and practices for record-keeping. Systems to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with pupils in school are secure. Staff receive regular training on potential areas of risk for young people, including radicalisation and 'sexting'. Staff know what to do should they have any concerns. Leaders engage very effectively with parents on safeguarding issues.
- Leaders have created a very strong culture of safeguarding in which pupils feel safe, valued and happy. It is therefore a great shame that such a significant proportion of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are missing out on this experience by not attending school regularly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Leaders' actions have brought about improvements in the quality of teaching but it still varies too much, particularly between subjects. Many pupils benefit from very effective teaching but this is not consistent throughout the school. Some pupils do not receive high-quality teaching in their lessons, which prevents them from making the best possible progress.
- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. This lack of challenge is preventing some pupils, particularly the most able, from making good progress.
- Lack of challenge is a particular concern in key stage 3. Some teachers do not have a good enough grasp of pupils' prior learning or starting points. This means that pupils are prevented from continuing the good progress that they have made in primary school. They also lose their enthusiasm for learning. Though leaders ensure that all pupils' pastoral needs are met during transition, this is not the case for all pupils' academic needs, particularly those of the most able.
- Leaders know that the focus on improving the quality of questioning has had variable impact across the school. This is confirmed by inspection evidence. Some teachers use questioning skilfully to check and extend pupils' understanding. Unfortunately, some teachers' questioning limits rather than deepens pupils' thinking.
- Pupils value the positive relationships that they have with their teachers and these make a strong contribution to the quality of learning. Many teachers have created very positive learning environments in their classrooms in which pupils feel safe, happy and confident. Teachers' strong subject knowledge also makes a significant contribution to pupils' progress.
- Many pupils benefit from high-quality teaching where teachers use their expertise and passion for their subject to enthuse and involve pupils in their learning. High-quality teaching, coupled with very effective leadership, is particularly evident in English, where outcomes for pupils are consistently strong. The arts are also a particular

strength in this school. In art, music and drama, teachers focus on encouraging full engagement and participation in their subjects. At the same time, the quality of teaching enables pupils to excel and reach high standards. Pupils generally speak very positively about the quality of teaching that they receive. They genuinely appreciate how their teachers help them to achieve well.

- Teaching assistants and other adults use their time effectively across the school to support pupils' learning.
- Leaders are working with staff to ensure that they are confident with the new national assessment system. Leaders are aware that further development is required to ensure that all staff are using assessment effectively to inform pupils' future learning and to plan for more rapid progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- PSHE and citizenship education are delivered through the school's 'RESPECT' programme. This takes place every day during tutor time. While the actual programme is strong and covers a range of important topics, including such areas as radicalisation and 'sexting', the quality of teaching of the topics is variable. This programme contributes significantly to pupils' personal development and welfare but some pupils are not receiving high-quality teaching of important topics.
- Pupils benefit from an effective careers guidance programme from Years 7 to 13. As well as the school's own career learning modules, pupils also have access to external careers advisors and coaches.
- Staff know and care for their pupils extremely well. Pupils feel very well supported. They say that they are able to talk to members of staff if they are worried about anything. Pupils value the range of sessions related to keeping safe, including online safety.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and that when it does happen it is dealt with effectively. Leaders have created a culture based on mutual respect and this is tangible across the school. Inspection evidence indicates that Gateacre School is a safe and happy place where pupils are comfortable to be themselves, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.
- Leaders are proactive in checking on the personal development, welfare and attendance of those pupils attending alternative provision.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvements.
- Despite leaders' best efforts, attendance rates across the school remain low. Too many pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, do not attend school regularly.

Ensuring that they do so is the most urgent challenge facing leaders. The current situation means that a large number of disadvantaged pupils are missing out on the strong safeguarding culture in the school. This level of absence is also having a significant detrimental effect on their progress and attainment.

- It is important to note that at the time of the last inspection, incorrect codes were being used in school to record pupils' absences. Consequently, the published attendance data for 2015/16 is incorrect. This means that it is not possible to make a year-on-year comparison. However, the figures at the end of 2016/17 give a stark message of the urgency that leaders must give to this issue. The headteacher is aware that the strategic leadership of this area requires improvement. Interventions have not been focused enough on key groups of pupils. Furthermore, the impact of actions has not been evaluated effectively enough.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved dramatically since the last inspection. Over the course of the inspection, inspectors saw no evidence of any low-level disruption in lessons. Pupils and staff say that this positive engagement is now typical across the school.
- The 'ready to learn' line that pupils cross as they come through the door every day has had a huge impact. Pupils, parents and staff all speak positively about it and the part it has played in changing the culture. Pupils show that they are ready to learn as they have the correct equipment and are wearing the correct uniform. This means that teachers can get on straight away with the business of teaching. This has had a significant impact on improving pupils' attitudes to learning.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and behave very well around school. During break and lunchtime their behaviour is mature and calm. They socialise well and show respect to each other and to staff.
- A more effective behaviour policy has contributed to the decline in the number of fixed-term exclusions since the last inspection.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over recent years, outcomes for pupils have been inadequate. The provisional GCSE results in 2017 show improvement across all key measures and demonstrate leaders' ability to rectify the poor performance of recent years. However, leaders are under no illusion that the overall outcomes for pupils require further improvement.
- Pupils overall made much better progress in 2017 than in recent years. This was also the case for disadvantaged pupils, the most able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders are pleased that the actions that they have taken to diminish the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of others nationally have had some success. They discussed with inspectors the measures that they are taking to diminish these differences even further.
- Although the most able pupils made better progress in 2017, leaders are aware that only a small proportion attained the highest grades. Not enough teachers are routinely providing sufficient challenge to ensure that these pupils achieve the high grades of which they are capable. This is the case in key stages 3 and 4.
- The provisional GCSE results in 2017 show that in the majority of subjects, pupils'

attainment improved. Building on the success of recent years, pupils continue to achieve very well in English. Outcomes improved in mathematics but pupils do not perform as well in this subject as they do in English. Outcomes for pupils in mathematics, science, geography and modern foreign languages require improvement, which leaders recognise and have prioritised.

- The school's current performance data is based on rigorous assessment procedures, including internal and external moderation. This information indicates that the trajectory of improvement in pupils' outcomes is set to continue over the coming years.
- Observations of learning and scrutiny of pupils' work show that many pupils are making better progress as a result of high-quality teaching. However, leaders are aware that this pattern is not consistent across the school.
- Staff try to monitor the progress of the small number of pupils who are attending alternative provision. This has proved difficult as information is not forthcoming from the provider or the local authority that has arranged the placements.
- Information about destinations for pupils leaving Year 11 shows that pupils are being well prepared to move on to further education and training.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The school's sixth form provides an inclusive and aspirational education for its students. Very effective leadership in the sixth form means that students benefit from a high-quality post-16 experience.
- The head of sixth form has a clear understanding of the strengths and the small number of areas that require further improvement in post-16 provision. Under her leadership there has been a rise in the quality of teaching and students' achievement across a wide range of academic and applied subjects. The systems for monitoring teaching and learning are robust. Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good.
- All students follow appropriate personalised study programmes that enable them to move on to higher education, training or full-time employment. An increasing number of students are taking up university places, including several at Russell Group universities.
- In 2016, the value-added outcomes were broadly in line with national averages across the range of academic and applied courses. The provisional results for 2017 show that the value-added outcomes are likely to be significantly above national averages. In 2017, students' outcomes in English, art, physics and sociology were particularly impressive, with a high proportion of pupils attaining A* to B grades.
- Students who have not attained a grade C in GCSE English or mathematics receive appropriate teaching and support. The success rates when learners retake these examinations are very high. In 2017, all students attained a grade C in English and 60% attained a grade C in mathematics.
- Careers education, information, advice and guidance are strong in the sixth form. Students' transitions to and from the sixth form are very well supported. Sixth-form tutors receive appropriate training so that they can assist students with their university applications. Students speak very positively about this support. All students complete a

work experience placement in Year 12 which is tailored to their interests and aspirations.

- A high priority is given to students' personal development, well-being and welfare. Students value the weekly PSHE sessions that include such topics as radicalisation awareness, alcohol and drugs misuse, healthy sexual relationships and online safety.
- Students have opportunities to take part in a range of enrichment activities, particularly within the arts. Many students volunteer to help younger pupils: for example, buddying Year 7 pupils to help them to settle in, or doing paired reading to help with literacy. All Year 12 students take the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), which strengthens their university applications.
- Attendance procedures have been tightened since the last inspection. This has not only improved the safeguarding of students, but contributed to the improvements in their outcomes. Attendance in the sixth form has improved in recent years but it is still not good enough. Leaders have identified this as an important area for improvement.

School details

Unique reference number	104700
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10040378

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 comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	999
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	115
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Mr David Cadwallader
Headteacher	Mr Jason Roberts
Telephone number	0151 363 1111
Website	www.gateacre.org
Email address	admin@gateacre.org
Date of previous inspection	18–19 May 2016

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. Only a very small proportion speak English as an additional language. There are more boys than girls on roll.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Alder Centre for Education, Prudential, Employability, Harmonize, New Heights, Award Education and Assess.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its

website.

- In 2016 the school did not meet the government's floor standards. The floor standards set the minimum expectations for progress and attainment at key stage 4.
- In 2016 the school met the government's definition of a coasting school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of subjects, including some joint observations with senior leaders. The lead inspector carried out a work scrutiny with the headteacher.
- Inspectors met with a group of sixth-form students and two other groups of pupils. They also talked with others informally during breaks and lunchtimes. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders and classroom teachers. A meeting was held with the chair and two other members of the interim executive board. The lead inspector also met with the local authority's principal school improvement officer.
- Inspectors took account of the 74 responses to Ofsted's online 'Parent View' survey, and had conversations with a small number of parents.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and development plan, information about the school's performance and a selection of policies, including those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Anne Seneviratne, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Emma Gregory	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stephen Ruddy	Ofsted Inspector
Timothy Gartside	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

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 www.gov.uk/ofsted.

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 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017