

# George Hastwell School Special Academy

Moor Tarn Lane, Walney Island, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA14 3LW

## Inspection dates

5–6 June 2018

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
Early years provision	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent between classes and subjects.
- The impact of middle leaders on pupils' achievement is limited. They lack the skills and expertise required to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively.
- The school's curriculum, most notably at key stages 2 and 3, is not sufficiently flexible to adapt to the wide range of pupils' needs. As a result, some pupils are not sufficiently well prepared for adulthood as they move into post-16 education.
- Pupils' progress slows as they move through key stages 2 and 3. As a result, pupils do not achieve the personal and academic outcomes of which they are capable.
- The school's assessment and tracking systems hinder leaders from gleaning valuable information about pupils' progress as they move throughout the school.
- Pupils do not have enough planned opportunities to take on roles and responsibilities across the school.
- A small minority of pupils are persistently absent from school.

### The school has the following strengths

- The early years provision is a strength of the school. Teachers' high aspirations, clear expectations and effective planning help children get off to a good start.
- Strong leadership has transformed the quality of education for students in the 16 to 19 provision. These students gain a wide range of qualifications, which help them to gain places at the colleges of their choice.
- This is a calm, orderly and happy school. Pupils are well cared for and safe. A culture of vigilance permeates the school.
- Senior leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The urgency with which the governors' 'rapid improvement committee' is tackling issues is starting to pay dividends.
- Senior leaders now keep a closer eye on the quality of teaching and learning. Regular learning walks, checks on work in pupils' books and pupils' progress meetings, are used well to hold teachers to account.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in key stages 2 and 3, so it enables pupils to make consistently strong progress across all year groups and subjects, by ensuring that teachers:
  - have the highest expectations of what all pupils can achieve both academically and personally from their different starting points
  - plan work that is well matched to pupils' needs and abilities
  - plan lessons which make good use of the time available so pupils are engaged in purposeful activities
  - encourage pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning and behaviour
  - receive high-quality training and support to help them use the school's agreed visual communication strategies confidently, accurately and consistently
  - make good use of the information set out in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Further improve the curriculum, particularly at key stages 2 and 3, so that it is tailored to pupils' needs and ensures that they are well prepared for adulthood.
- Improve the school's assessment and tracking systems so leaders and teachers can readily access the information that they need about pupils' achievement.
- Provide pupils with more opportunities to take on roles and responsibilities both in class and around school in order to develop their independence.
- Improve the quality of leadership, and so raise pupils' achievement, by developing the skills, knowledge and roles of middle leaders to enable them to have a greater impact on school improvement.
- Improve the attendance of the small minority of pupils who are persistently absent.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school. Her aspirations and expectations are shared by the new senior leadership team, governors and directors of the multi-academy trust. The establishment of a 'rapid improvement committee' by the governing body has brought about a collective urgency to improve the school's performance. Leaders have a deep and accurate understanding of the school. This has helped them put together a credible improvement plan. As a result, the legacy of poor performance is being eliminated.
- The newly appointed senior leadership team have a proven track record of school improvement. They have already improved the early years, 16 to 19 provision and attendance at George Hastwell School. They have the confidence and support of the staff team. This senior leadership team are already starting to have influence across the rest of the school. As a result, teaching and pupils' outcomes are improving.
- Senior leaders have made sure that the information they collect from teachers about pupils' achievement is reliable. Leaders use this information in pupil progress meetings to hold teachers to account for how well their classes are getting on. Moreover, senior leaders have used information from these meetings well to pinpoint aspects of teaching and learning which need improvement across the school.
- While teachers' assessments are accurate, the current system that is used to track pupils' progress is limited. The system does not enable leaders and teachers to evaluate easily pupils' progress and attainment over time across the broad range of performance indicators that they use. This makes it tricky for leaders to evaluate how well pupils achieve from their different starting points, across a key stage or from when they join the school.
- Leaders have made considerable improvements to the curriculum. When the school opened, leaders designed and implemented a broad and balanced, topic-based curriculum. However, leaders' most recent reviews of this curriculum identified that it does not fully meet the needs of current pupils. As a result, leaders are designing a new curriculum model which better meets pupils' diverse needs and abilities. This new model has been trialled in the 16 to 19 provision. Reviews of this new approach have been very positive.
- Subject leadership is weak. These middle leaders do not have the training, support or resources to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. As a result, they do not make a positive difference to the quality of teaching or to the curriculum.
- Senior leaders have invested in training and support for classroom teaching staff. This is helping to improve the quality of teaching. For example, following a session on marking and feedback, classroom teaching staff now help pupils to know what they need to do to improve their work. In addition, specialist training has ensured that support staff in particular are adept at managing pupils' medical and care needs, with minimal disruption to their learning.
- Leaders have made effective use of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding. Pupil premium funding has been used well to improve pupils' attendance and to help

support pupils' emotional resilience. Overall, pupils' attendance has risen, the number of serious behaviour incidents has reduced and pupils' outcomes in personal, social and health education (PSHE) have improved.

- The school has used some of the physical education (PE) and sport funding to provide additional swimming lessons for pupils. As a result, pupils are making greater progress in mastering swimming and improving their awareness of water safety. However, the school's outdoor space does not motivate pupils to be physically active at breaks and lunchtime. Together with the dearth of sporting clubs, this limits the amount of physical activity pupils take part in other than in PE lessons.

### **Governance of the school**

- The establishment of the governing body's 'rapid improvement committee' has been a catalyst for change. Experienced and expert governors provide suitable challenge and support. When presented with information, they ask insightful questions which help them acquire an accurate understanding about the school's effectiveness. Governors have sought effective support for the school from a range of professionals to help tackle the most pressing issues.
- There is absolute clarity between the multi-academy trust board, local governing body and senior leaders around roles and responsibilities. Clear lines of accountability ensure that there is no doubt as to who is responsible for what.
- Governors know the school well. They make sure they receive a wealth of reliable information about the school's performance from a range of sources, including external consultants. This provides reassurance to the governing body about the impact of the school's improvement plans.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders carry out thorough pre-employment checks to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children, pupils and students. The safeguarding governor carries out regular checks to reassure herself that systems and procedures are working well. Comprehensive staff training makes sure that all staff understand and carry out their responsibilities effectively.
- Staff use the school's online systems well to record and report any concerns. The designated safeguarding lead follows up meticulously on these concerns.
- The school works closely with other agencies to keep pupils safe. Staff signpost pupils and their families to specialist advice and support when needed. Pupils and staff agree that any rare incidents of bullying are dealt with well by staff. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, both online and in the community.
- The school carries out comprehensive risk assessments to make sure pupils are safe both in school and when out on trips and visits. Staff are highly vigilant and quick to spot any potential causes for concern, particularly for those pupils with medical conditions.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- There is too much variability and inconsistency in the impact of teaching on pupils' learning across the school. Although the youngest pupils get off to a good start, as they move through key stages 2 and 3, pupils' progress slows so that despite stronger progress in key stage 4, pupils are not sufficiently well prepared for the transition to post 16.
- Some teaching staff use questioning well to probe pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking. These teachers use this information well to reshape tasks as required if pupils are struggling or to move pupils' learning on quickly when objectives have been met. For example, in English, questioning is used effectively to develop pupils' inference and deduction skills. Moreover, pupils' understanding of the meaning of unfamiliar words is checked, to help them make sense of the text and develop their vocabulary.
- Most teachers work closely with support staff so that the class team understand their roles and work seamlessly together. Where this happens, support staff are highly attuned to pupils' moods so they are able to step in quickly to avert any potential disruptions to learning. Moreover, these skilled support staff take an active role in teaching, which enables the teacher to plan lessons which better meet the diverse needs of the pupils. As a result, teaching and learning generally proceed without interruption.
- Information about pupils' performance is disjointed. This makes it tricky for leaders to evaluate how well pupils are getting on both academically and in their personal development. Anecdotally, teaching staff are able to show evidence of gains in knowledge, skills and understanding for individual pupils. However, teachers do not systematically record this learning nor use this information routinely to plan next steps. In the older and younger classes, teachers use the school's new records of achievement well to show progress and inform their planning.
- Too few staff are confident and competent in using the range of visual communication systems as directed by senior leaders. Some staff have not had the specialist training needed to master these communication systems, others are not using them consistently across all parts of the school day. This is hampering the progress of pupils who rely on these systems to communicate and develop speech.
- Leaders ensure that teachers new to the school, including newly qualified teachers, have help and support to enable them to meet the challenges of teaching pupils with a wide range of needs and abilities.
- Most staff use the school's agreed approach to planning. This helps teachers to better match the work set to meet the range of pupils' needs and abilities. However, the activities planned are not always pitched appropriately.
- Teachers' weak subject knowledge hampers the quality of teaching in some subjects, such as Spanish. In these subjects, teachers have not had the training and support to help them teach confidently and competently. As a result, these subjects are rarely taught in those classes led by non-specialists.
- There is no systematic approach to building on pupils' personal and social skills as they move through the school. The most able pupils in the early years and key stage 1 class

are routinely taking responsibility as class monitors, working with their peers and anticipating what will happen next in lessons. However, as pupils move up through the school, teachers do not build on these skills. Consequently, older pupils remain overly dependent on adult support for managing both their learning and behaviour.

- Some teachers make good use of the information and objectives set out in pupils' EHC plans to inform their learning activities. This helps teachers to plan lessons which enable pupils to acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding to achieve their long-term goals. However, this approach is not evident across the school so that in those classes where EHC plans are not well used, pupils' progress slows.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Relationships are a strength of the school. The school is warm, welcoming and happy. Staff are kind and caring towards their pupils. This helps pupils feel safe, secure and valued. For many pupils this is their 'second home'. New pupils settle quickly and good communication links reassure parents and carers their children are looked after well.
- Pupils are disappointed that the school council has not met recently. They valued the opportunity the school council gave them to share their views with staff and influence some key decisions about school life.
- Staff and pupils enjoy the values assemblies that were introduced earlier this year. From the youngest pupils upwards, pupils are keen to demonstrate each week's values in their work and play. For example, during the 'I take pride in my work' week, pupils were eager to share work they were proud of with the rest of the school.
- Pupils are keen to raise money for local and national charities. They have taken part in a 'bake off', sponsored walks and a 'Race for Life' event.
- The school makes good use of the local area to enhance the curriculum. Younger pupils enjoy their visits to the library; older pupils enjoy their outdoor learning at Haybridge Reserve.
- Older pupils are incredibly insightful into the impact that their own behaviour has on others. This insight helps them to be sympathetic and supportive towards their classmates. Pupils treat each other with tolerance and respect. They are adamant that any pupils would be welcomed at their school regardless of race, religion or sexual orientation. However, pupils have few opportunities to learn about different cultures and other religions first hand.
- The promotion of children's and pupils' independence skills, which is well embedded in early years and key stage 1, is not built on throughout school. Pupils remain too dependent on adult support as they move through school to direct their learning and to regulate their behaviour.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The recently appointed leader for attendance has taken effective action to improve pupils' attendance. He has made sure that parents are aware of the importance of good school attendance. Robust systems and procedures are now in place to follow up on pupils' absence. Pupils are keen to earn certificates for good attendance. As a result of this work, the historical decline in attendance has been reversed. However, despite these improvements, a small minority of pupils still miss out on too much learning as a result of their persistent absence.
- The school is generally calm and orderly. Staff know pupils well and are swift to intervene when any pupil becomes unsettled. Staff use de-escalation strategies effectively so serious incidents are rare. Staff record any behaviour incidents meticulously, making sure that pupils' behaviour plans are reviewed accordingly.
- Pupils are pleasant and polite to each other, staff and visitors. They are keen to celebrate the successes of their classmates and commiserate when things do not work out so well.
- Pupils are eager to please their teachers. Generally, pupils listen attentively, try hard with their work and follow instructions. However, on occasion, when the pace of learning slows or lessons are not well matched to pupils' ages and developmental stages, pupils can lose concentration quickly and sometimes disrupt the learning of others.
- Pupils find break and lunchtimes boring. There are too few resources and activities to keep pupils busy. Consequently, pupils do not use the time purposefully to play games, socialise with friends or learn new skills.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Teaching staff help pupils to settle in quickly at whatever point they join the school. Almost all pupils are working well below the standard expected for their age when they join the school. For the vast majority of pupils their learning needs are such that they make slower progress than is typical. However, over the past two years an increasing proportion of the older pupils have gained some relevant academic qualifications and moved on successfully to 16 to 19 provision.
- For the youngest and oldest pupils, teachers are developing more personalised curriculum pathways. This approach pays dividends as it helps the youngest pupils make stronger progress from their different starting points. Students in the sixth form are exceeding their own expectations as they gain qualifications which recognise their individual achievements and prepare them well for their next steps.
- The pace of learning slows across key stages 2 and 3. Teachers do not ensure that pupils capitalise on the good start they make in early years and key stage 1. As a result, despite pupils' strong progress across key stage 4, there is insufficient time to make up the ground lost in key stages 2 and 3, so that pupils are well prepared for key stage 5.
- Pupils make good progress in most aspects of English, mathematics and personal,

social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Pupils achieve particularly well in number. Leaders have worked with teaching staff to improve pupils' communication as this has been a weaker aspect of English across the school.

- Teachers' lack of subject knowledge hampers pupils' learning in some subjects including Spanish and PE. In addition, some cross-curricular topics do not take account of pupils' needs and abilities and so pupils struggle to make sense of what is being taught.
- Pupils benefit from subject specialist teaching in music. The music teacher knows pupils well and carefully tailors the lessons to pupils' aptitudes and interests. As a result, pupils enjoy the music sessions and make good progress in this subject.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- The experienced and expert early years leader has a clear vision shared with all early years staff. This highly skilled team has high expectations for every single child, regardless of their special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. As a result, children get off to a strong start in the Nursery and Reception class.
- The early years leader has an accurate view of the strengths and areas for improvement in this provision. She refines and improves the provision continually to meet the diverse needs and abilities of each cohort.
- Considerable investment in training and support for the early years staff has paid dividends. Staff use the agreed visual communication systems consistently. Consequently, children's communication and language skills improve quickly from their starting points.
- Staff vigilance ensures that children are well cared for and safe. All early years welfare requirements are met. Staff have put in place well-considered policies and procedures which are tailored to the individual needs of each cohort.
- Staff pay close attention to children's learning. They use the information, advice and objectives in each child's EHC plan to tailor provision to children's needs. Staff gather a wealth of evidence to help them evaluate children's progress and plan next steps. Children make strong progress towards the early learning goals.
- The teaching team's considerable experience and expertise ensure that they manage children's health and care needs skilfully. Staff ensure that any disruption to learning is minimal, ensuring that children access as much of the school day as possible.
- Children settle quickly at the start of the school day. Movement between the different activities across the school day is smooth. Children are reassured by the well-established routines and consistent approaches used by staff.
- The early years is a hive of activity throughout the day. Children enjoy saying 'good morning' to their teachers and classmates, taking part in the wealth of different activities from peer massage to painting. They are encouraged to be as independent as possible, for example choosing their snacks and helping to tidy up. Children are kind to each other, keen to please their teachers and enthusiastic about their learning.



## 16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The highly effective leader for the 16 to 19 provision has led a transformation in the quality of education for the school's oldest students. His relentless focus on preparing students for life after school is improving the academic and personal outcomes for this group.
- Current students are adamant that staff have helped them to exceed their aspirations and expectations for what they could achieve. Students have risen to the challenges set by their teachers. They relish the increased levels of challenge in lessons, enjoy taking on greater responsibility and value the excellent relationships with their teachers.
- Students are now successfully sitting examinations for a range of external qualifications. Thorough revision, handy hints and tips, and constant reassurance from staff have sealed students' success. Students are delighted with their achievements.
- All students move on successfully to college courses. The 16 to 19 leader keeps in close contact with the colleges to find out how former students are getting on. He uses any 'lessons learned' from former students who have struggled to help reshape, refine and improve the provision for current students. As a result, students are given better support to choose the most appropriate college and course so that they are successfully completing post-19 courses. However, students are not sufficiently discerning in choosing courses which will lead them to their preferred career pathways.
- Recent improvements to the 16 to 19 curriculum mean that teaching is more relevant to students' interests, aptitudes and ambitions. The 16 to 19 leader has introduced a broader range of qualifications which stand the students in good stead for their next steps. There is a greater emphasis on helping students to make better informed choices about their future career aspirations. For example, students now attend a short course in catering at a local college, which gives students a taste of life in a mainstream further education setting.
- Students relish the school's new approach to work experience. Students have risen to the challenges presented on their week-long placements. They have shown themselves to be reliable, responsible and willing employees. These placements have given students a more realistic view of the world of work.
- Students feel safe in school. Moreover, they are aware of risks, both online and in their community. They are given helpful information and advice by school about how to keep themselves safe. Students feel comfortable to confide in an adult if they have any worries or concerns. Students like taking on responsibility for younger pupils, for example supervising pupils getting on and off the minibuses.
- Students relish the increased range of trips and visits on offer. Residential trips, such as the recent visits to Manchester, and Bendrigg Lodge, help equip students with some of the skills they will need for adult life, such as using public transport.
- The vast majority of pupils attend on time every day. The 16 to 19 leader and attendance leader work successfully together to support those students who struggle to get to school.

- Leaders carry out robust checks on alternative providers to reassure themselves of the quality of education provided as well as students' attendance, behaviour and welfare.

## School details

Unique reference number	141993
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10046613

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	22
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Liz Moffatt
Headteacher	Karen Baxter
Telephone number	01229 475 253
Website	<a href="http://www.georgehastwell.org.uk">www.georgehastwell.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@georgehastwell.org.uk">admin@georgehastwell.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school converted to academy status in September 2015. The school is sponsored by the Queen Katherine Multi-Academy Trust. There is also a local governing body.
- There has been significant turbulence in the senior leadership of the school since it opened. The current headteacher took up post in June 2015. The current senior leadership team is comprised of the headteacher and two acting assistant headteachers. A new substantive leadership team has been appointed from September 2018.
- The school receives support from a national leader of education.

- Pupils join the school at different ages and different times in the academic year.
- All pupils have an EHC. All pupils have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, often with associated conditions, such as autistic spectrum conditions or attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders.
- The school serves pupils from Barrow-in-Furness and the Furness peninsula.
- The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic groups is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average. Currently, there are no children attending the school who are looked after.
- There are many more boys than girls on roll.
- The 16 to 19 department works with one alternative provider: Cowran Farm.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school, including joint observations with the headteacher and acting assistant headteacher. Inspectors checked work in a range of pupils' books.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, the chair and a member of the local governing body, the chief executive officer and a director of Queen Katherine Multi-Academy Trust and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors spoke with a representative of a local further education college.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school improvement planning and assessment information.
- Inspectors spoke formally with pupils, as well as informally during the school day and observed them during breaktimes.
- There was one response to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. Inspectors spoke with a number of parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the 14 written responses to Ofsted's staff survey. Inspectors spoke formally with a group of staff.

## Inspection team

Pippa Jackson Maitland, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Cole Andrew

Ofsted Inspector

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