

Inspection of Gateacre School

Hedgefield Road, Gateacre, Liverpool, Merseyside L25 2RW

Inspection dates:

3–4 March 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, parents and carers are positive about the improvements that leaders are making at this school.

Every pupil is welcomed into school every day by caring staff. This helps staff to know pupils well, and to stay alert to pupils' concerns. The pupils and students who spoke to us said that they feel safe. They get along well together. Bullying is rare. It is sorted out quickly if it does happen.

Pupils and students behave well in class. They try hard in lessons. They move around school sensibly and they arrive at their lessons on time. Pupils wear their uniforms with pride.

Pupils are learning more across the curriculum. This is because teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve academically. Pupils are achieving higher standards in their GCSE examinations than other pupils in the past. That said, pupils' achievement overall is still not good enough.

Pupils can take part in over one hundred different activities, clubs and responsibilities during their time at the school.

Students in the sixth form benefit from high-quality curriculums. As a result, they achieve well in both academic and vocational courses.

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

The headteacher's recent appointment has provided further impetus and direction for staff. Leaders at all levels are working as a team to raise standards across the school. Leaders know the school and its pupils very well. They are clear about what needs to be done to secure a good quality of education for all pupils. Staff support the changes that are being made.

In recent years, pupils have not achieved well enough in their GCSE examinations. This has prompted leaders to review subject curriculum plans. Most curriculum plans are now well organised. They help teachers to build on pupils' previous learning in a logical order.

In a few subjects at key stage 3, and in science, such well-developed curriculums are not in place. These curriculums leave pupils short of some important subject knowledge. Leaders in these subjects know how to bridge these gaps. They are redesigning what they plan to teach.

Pupils' skills in speaking, reading and writing are improving. This is helping pupils and students across the school to access the curriculum. For example, pupils are reading more often to learn about subjects in more depth.

There have also been improvements in how well teachers deliver the curriculum. In part, this is because of the training that subject leaders and teachers now receive. Mostly, teachers check that pupils have a secure understanding of the most important knowledge. Some teachers then ensure that pupils and students can apply this knowledge to more complex learning. This happens regularly in the sixth form, but not enough in key stages 3 and 4.

In the sixth form, curriculum plans are planned and delivered well. As a result, students do well in both their academic and vocational examinations. This includes students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged students. Leaders make sure that students are prepared well to move on to the training and courses they wish to undertake. Most students move on to university courses.

Pupils are being offered a greater range of qualifications to choose from in key stage 4. These choices better match pupils' needs and interests and help them achieve their ambitions. This includes disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.

Leaders take their duty to provide a strong education for pupils with SEND seriously. Staff support this group of pupils well.

Some pupils' poor attendance in the past has hampered their achievement. Leaders have improved the systems to monitor attendance. They have also increased the support they provide for pupils who struggle to attend school regularly. Leaders' actions are making a difference. More pupils attend school regularly. However, some disadvantaged pupils continue to be absent from school too often. They miss out on important learning. Students in the sixth form have high rates of attendance.

Leaders provide pupils with a strong personal development curriculum. Pupils are interested, and they feel involved in what goes on in their city, and in the wider world. They know about and value people's differences. Pupils said that they are prepared well to become British citizens. They feel that they can make a positive difference to the world.

Staff put themselves out to provide a wide range of experiences for pupils beyond their lessons. Many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and those students in the sixth form, take part in and enjoy these opportunities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff take pupils' safety and well-being very seriously. They take the time to get to know pupils well. Leaders provide regular training, so staff know what to look out for if pupils or sixth-form students are unhappy or might be at risk. Staff know how to deal with safeguarding concerns. Leaders ensure that, when such concerns are identified, vulnerable pupils and their families receive appropriate support. Pupils

know how to keep themselves safe, including online. They know who to go to in school if they are worried or have concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Most teachers check that pupils' earlier learning is secure. However, in key stages 3 and 4, there remain occasions when pupils are unable to stretch their thinking and apply this knowledge to more complex learning. This prevents some pupils from grasping the more complex long-term aims of ambitious subject curriculums. Leaders must continue to address the weaknesses that remain in how the curriculum is delivered in key stages 3 and 4 so that pupils can achieve well.
- Leaders have acted to improve the quality of the curriculum. However, the curriculum does not fully match the coverage of the national curriculum in a few subjects. Leaders must complete the planning and successful delivery of the key stage 3 curriculum and the science curriculum so that pupils can access a curriculum that is at least as broad and ambitious as the national curriculum.
- Leaders are working hard to overcome the weak attendance of some pupils. Pupils' attendance has improved since the last inspection. Most pupils attend school regularly. However, too many disadvantaged pupils are still regularly absent from school. This means they miss out on important learning. Leaders should continue to improve the attendance of this group of pupils so that they attend school regularly.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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	104700
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10121934
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,005
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Cadwallader
Headteacher	Gareth Jones
Website	www.gateacre.org
Date of previous inspection	3–4 October 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2019.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Assess Education, Everton Free School, JMH Training, Harmonize Academy and New Heights High School.

Information about this inspection

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

- We held meetings with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, the chair of governors and other governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- We reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks on staff and referrals to the local authority. We spoke with staff about how they help to keep pupils safe.

We also asked pupils how they keep themselves safe and what to do if they have concerns.

- We held discussions with staff and considered 44 responses to Ofsted’s online staff questionnaire.
- We considered the views of 38 parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey, including the 30 free-text responses.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: art, English, history, mathematics and science. We discussed the arrangements for the curriculum and teaching with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers. We visited lessons and then spoke with pupils about their learning. We looked at examples of pupils’ work in their exercise books and folders in these subjects.

Inspection team

Stephen Ruddy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Hermitt	Ofsted Inspector
Dawn Farrent	Ofsted Inspector
Colin Bell	Ofsted Inspector

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