

# Inspection of Samuel Laycock School

Broadoak Road, Ashton Under Lyne OL6 8RF

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Inspection dates: 22 to 24 June 2021

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils do not achieve well at this school. The expectations that leaders and staff set for pupils are too low. As a result, pupils do not have opportunities to achieve qualifications that are relevant for their abilities or aspirations.

Pupils' education has been disrupted because of significant changes in staffing and leadership. Recent improvements are starting to make sure that pupils get a better deal. That said, many pupils have considerable ground to make up. They are not well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

In contrast, pupils' personal development, their behaviour and their attitudes to learning have not faltered during the recent turbulent times. In part, this is due the close attention that staff pay to this aspect of pupils' needs. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel cared for and protected. Pupils treat each other equally and with respect. Staff support them well to manage their own behaviour. Pupils told inspectors that they are safe from bullying because staff intervene before issues escalate.

Pupils' independence and social skills are well developed. They listen to the views of others and debate issues with consideration and humour, such as in their discussion topic 'Is a hot dog a sandwich?' All pupils access learning that focuses on independence and preparation for life skills. This includes future career options.

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

Since the previous full inspection, the continuing turbulence in staff, including in the leadership team, has led to a lack of focus on the development of the curriculum. The current curriculum does not take sufficient account of pupils' individual abilities or their learning targets. It reinforces leaders' and staff's low expectations. The support that the local authority has put in place from New Bridge Multi-Academy Trust is starting to breathe life back into the school. Staff are starting to feel valued and they are keen to embrace change. However, this work is recent. There has been too little time for this external support to make a difference to the curriculum that pupils experience.

Governors have failed in their duties to hold leaders to account for school improvement. They have neglected to check on the quality of education in the school. For example, they have not questioned how an excessive workload for the teaching staff has resulted in high levels of staff's absence and changes in staffing .

The curriculum for reading is not fit for purpose. There is no continuity in the way pupils are taught to read. This is especially true for pupils when they move from Year 7 to Year 8. The strategies that staff use to teach reading limit pupils' progress. For example, there is no fidelity to one way of teaching phonics in key stage 3 and the books that pupils read do not match their abilities. As a result, pupils do not

read confidently and fluently. Leaders have put new initiatives into place in Year 8 and Year 9. These strategies are beginning to recapture pupils' enthusiasm for reading. However, it is too soon to see if this work is bearing fruit in helping them to read.

In other subjects in key stage 3, there has been too much prescription about what is learned and when. A one-size-fits-all approach means that in subjects such as science, personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), and art and design, pupils study the same content despite being in different year groups. Until recently, staff have been left with no freedom to adapt work to suit the needs or abilities of pupils. There has been little leadership of different subjects and staff's knowledge of the curriculum has not been developed well. As a result, pupils with very different needs and abilities achieve similar outcomes in their work. This is because the curriculum is not structured to build on pupils' prior learning. For example, in key stage 4, the curriculum for mathematics is solely for based on accreditations that lack aspiration. Many pupils are capable of achieving more.

In stark contrast to this, pupils' personal development, behaviour and attitudes are good. These aspects of the school are led well. The leader for behaviour has ensured that staff have received training on how to spot the signs that lead up to pupils becoming frustrated. This insight helps to prevent instances of misbehaviour. As such, lessons proceed without interruption. Leaders have also encouraged and supported families to ensure that all Year 11 pupils are currently attending school.

Teachers ensure that pupils learn the life skills that they will need in the future, such as how to travel independently. Staff understand pupils' personal development needs because of the strong relationships that are in place. Pupils gain an understanding of equalities. They know about differences between people in society, including those of different faiths and cultures. Pupils also know how to keep themselves healthy.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils told inspectors that they felt safe because of the care that staff provide. The effective way in which staff look after pupils mean that pupils feel safe from harassment. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when online. All staff and governors receive relevant training. Staff are vigilant to possible signs of neglect or abuse. Leaders' records show that any concerns are recorded in detail. Where concerns are raised, actions are followed up swiftly to achieve positive outcomes for pupils and their families.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in key stage 3 and key stage 4 does not set high enough expectations for pupils' learning, including in reading. As a result, pupils are not able to achieve as well as they should. Leaders must rapidly improve the quality of the curriculum by setting out the core knowledge that they want pupils to learn in each subject. This should be sequenced progressively so that pupils can build on their prior learning to know and remember more.
- Presently, there is a one-size-fits-all approach to the curriculum which means that pupils' work is very similar in content and quality, despite their different abilities and learning needs. This is limiting the breadth of the curriculum and does not help pupils to achieve their individual targets. Leaders should ensure that work is matched more closely to the ages and stages of pupils' development. This should provide pupils with a broader experience of each subject and opportunities to take qualifications that are relevant to their abilities and aspirations.
- Governors do not have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. The lack of vision and challenge for leaders means that the quality of education in the school has declined. Leaders and governors should work rapidly to improve the quality of governance. This should enable governors to fulfil their statutory duties to set the strategic direction for the school and to hold leaders to account for the educational performance of the school.
- The role of subject leaders is underdeveloped. They have had very little influence in the curriculum that is on offer. This has contributed to a curriculum that lacks structure and ambition. Leaders should strengthen curriculum leadership, so that staff are well supported in adapting the curriculum to meet the different needs and abilities of pupils.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

## **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 [here](#).

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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	106280
<b>Local authority</b>	Tameside
<b>Inspection number</b>	10184373
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 17
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	177
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Joyce Howarth
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jennifer Tinsdeall (Acting headteacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.samuellaycock.org.uk">www.samuellaycock.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11 March 2020

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. There is a designated unit for pupils with autism spectrum disorder on site.
- Since the previous full inspection in March 2020, 18 members of staff, including teachers and support staff, have left the school, with a further 27 new staff joining the school.
- Six governors have also left the school, with three new governors joining the governing body.
- The acting headteacher was not present during this inspection.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.
- All pupils in Year 11 were attending at the time of the inspection.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, subject leaders and members of the school staff. The lead inspector also spoke to five governors and held a discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from across the school to ask them about safeguarding. They reviewed documentation, which included the school's safeguarding policy, register of the checks carried out on new employees and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors also met with pupils to ask them about their learning in a range of subjects and about the opportunities that they have for their personal development.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and discussed behaviour and bullying with pupils, senior leaders and other staff.
- Inspectors took account of 13 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and 53 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered reading, mathematics, computing, PSHE and design technology deeply as part of this inspection. For these subjects, inspectors spoke with the adviser from the New Bridge Trust, met with curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils, undertook an analysis of pupils' work and visited lessons. Inspectors heard pupils from Years 7, 8 and 9 read. They also looked at pupils' work in science, art and design, humanities and writing and looked at curriculum plans for each of these subjects.

### **Inspection team**

Steve Bentham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mark Quinn

Her Majesty's Inspector

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