

Inspection of Kilton Thorpe Specialist Academy

Marshall Drive, Brotton, Saltburn-by-the-Sea TS12 2UW

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Kilton Thorpe Specialist Academy (KTS) is a warm and welcoming school. Pupils thrive here and they relish coming to school. They are kind to each other. Pupils feel safe. They behave impeccably. Pupils say that bullying is very rare but trust adults to sort out any problems when they do happen. Pupils are proud of what they achieve and celebrate the success of others. They know that their teachers and other staff will help them learn.

Leaders and governors are relentless in their ambition for all pupils to achieve their best. Staff care passionately about pupils. Pupils' well-being and development are at the very heart of the school. Developing pupils' communication and reading skills are a core part of every school day. Pupils talk excitedly about the stories and rhymes that teachers read to them. From early years onwards, pupils are prepared for life. They learn how to be independent and how to look after themselves. They learn about their rights and learn that everyone is equal. They know that it is important to respect and treat others equally.

Teachers know every pupil exceptionally well. Staff plan carefully to help every individual do better. Parents and carers recognise this. Parental feedback is overwhelmingly positive. Often, they describe the school as 'brilliant', 'fantastic' and 'second to none'. One parent spoke for many when they said that the school 'enables children to flourish and to be themselves' and that staff 'encourage children to be the best they can be'. Parents praise the school for 'being amazing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic' and say their children go 'from strength to strength' as a result of the 'wonderful staff'.

What does the school do well?

Leaders have a clear vision to provide all pupils with an exceptional education. They have designed two ambitious curriculum pathways. Both the developmental pathway and the formal pathway support pupils very well. They make excellent progress from their starting points. Both pathways successfully develop pupils' communication, reading and mathematical knowledge and skills. They also allow pupils to be creative, inquisitive and learn about the world around them. There is a rich early years environment. This provides a stimulating foundation for children. Most pupils in school have complex needs and follow the developmental curriculum. However, leaders check pupils' progress often and identify when pupils should be taught a 'blend' of both curriculums.

Staff share leaders' vision for pupils to excel, and work tirelessly to achieve this. Staff are proud of the difference that they make to pupils' lives. Teachers and their class team work together to check pupils' individual knowledge and decide what their next steps will be. Classrooms are set out well. There are high staffing ratios. This leads to purposeful and stimulating learning for all pupils. As a result, pupils achieve exceptionally well.

At the heart of the success of the school is the individualised target setting for each pupil. Teachers use education, health and care plans to identify what they need to do to get the best outcomes for each pupil. Staff work alongside other professionals to understand how to meet each pupil's specific needs. Using all this information, teachers set personal goal targets for each pupil. Teachers plan individual activities in lessons that help pupils to build on their knowledge and skills. These might include the use of technology, sign language and other special resources to support pupils in their communication. As such, every pupil has a voice and is able to learn in their own, unique way.

Leaders are determined that pupils know their own, individual rights. The school's Rights Respecting School Gold Award is the foundation for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Displays around school promote children's rights. Rights of the week are discussed in assemblies and through the curriculum. As a result, pupils know that their opinions matter.

Pupils enjoy a wide offer of enrichment activities. They take on responsibility through student council, enterprise or running the café. Pupils' personal development is an integral part of the preparing for adulthood curriculum. This is woven through the curriculum from early years through to sixth form. Pupils learn life skills, such as cooking, managing money and independent travel.

Post-16 students have personalised study programmes. They have vocational opportunities and work experience. They gain qualifications that prepare them for their next steps. All students who leave KTS go on to appropriate destinations.

Staff feel very proud to work at the school. They feel supported and valued by leaders. Staff recognise that leaders take their workload and well-being into account.

Leaders and governors are relentless in their ambition to achieve the best outcomes for pupils. They are reflective and have a desire to keep improving, despite the school's undoubted strengths and successes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at KTS. Leaders ensure that all staff are well trained. Leaders ensure that staff have a very clear understanding of the additional needs and vulnerabilities of their pupils and know how to keep them safe. Governors ensure that policies and procedures are effective.

Leaders monitor individual cases. They are proactive in referring to outside agencies when this is needed. They work with families and other professionals to keep pupils safe and healthy.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. They know whom to speak to if they have concerns.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	139110
Local authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	10212212
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	170
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Margaret Hadland
Headteacher	Brian Richardson
Website	www.kts-academy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	2 and 3 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Kilton Thorpe Specialist Academy is a special school for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils have been diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder. Many pupils have severe or profound learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school operates from two sites.
- There were no children of nursery age in the school at the time of the inspection.
- Since the last inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 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 the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair, and spoke to the external school improvement partner.
- Inspectors met with those responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors looked at a range of documentation linked to safeguarding, including the single central record, which records recruitment checks made on staff. Inspectors talked to pupils during the inspection and asked them about how safe they feel.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in: reading, mathematics, physical education/physical development and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils to discuss their learning, heard them read and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in English and computing.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from the lower, upper and post-16 phases of the school. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes was observed.
- Inspectors considered a range of evidence related to behaviour, attitudes to learning and personal development by meeting with leaders, talking to pupils and reviewing relevant documentation.
- Responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff, pupils and parents were considered.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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