

Inspection of George Hastwell School Special Academy

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

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Children in the early years, pupils, and students in the sixth form have warm and trusting relationships with staff. Pupils, including three-year-old children in the early years, have adults around them who know them well. Pupils feel safe and happy in school. They enjoy breaktimes, where they join in team games and socialise with their friends.

Pupils enjoy the different activities on offer to them. They particularly love the new 'sign and sing' after-school club. They cannot wait to sing in the local festival. Pupils enjoy residential trips, where they take part in outdoor activities such as horse riding, swimming and other sports.

Pupils' and students' behaviour is improving because staff help pupils to use different strategies to manage their emotions. However, pupils' behaviour sometimes disrupts learning. Occasionally, pupils fall out. That said, staff are quick to intervene and help pupils to understand different points of view. Pupils told inspectors that staff deal with bullying effectively.

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils and students. However, pupils do not achieve as well as they should because the curriculum is not designed well enough to help them to know and remember more

Members of the student council are proud that they help to improve their school. They have had a say in the recent changes to school lunches and have ideas to further improve the outdoor spaces.

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

New senior leaders have brought about many improvements in a short space of time. They recognise that the current school curriculum does not allow pupils to achieve highly enough. The curriculum does not make clear what children in the early years, pupils across the rest of the school and students in the sixth form need to learn and when they need to learn it.

Subject curriculums vary in quality and detail. This impacts on teachers' delivery of the curriculum. For example, in some subjects, teachers do not establish what pupils already know and understand before they introduce new learning. Consequently, gaps appear and subsequent learning does not build on pupils' and students' prior knowledge.

Some teachers use assessment strategies well to plan useful next steps for pupils' and students' learning. These teachers use the targets in pupils' and students' education, health and care (EHC) plans effectively. However, these strategies are not used consistently well by staff across the school to meet pupils' and students'

learning needs and to build on what they already know. This means that many pupils and students do not achieve as highly as they should.

Leaders have recently introduced a new reading curriculum to ensure that the teaching of phonics is consistent across the school. Pupils and students now read regularly. Children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 enjoy learning phonics. However, the reading books that children and pupils currently use to practise their reading are not well matched to the sounds that they know. This hinders their ability to read with accuracy and confidence.

The new senior leadership team has brought about rapid improvements in pupils' and students' behaviour. Staff are well trained to manage pupils' and students' behaviour. Staff support pupils and students to understand and manage their emotions. Pupils' and students' attitudes to learning are positive. Lessons are mainly not disrupted by pupils' or students' behaviour. However, in some subjects, the activities provided for pupils and students do not match the intended curriculum or support pupils' or students' SEND needs. When this happens, pupils do not manage well. Behaviour deteriorates and little or no learning takes place.

Leaders ensure pupils regularly learn about the school's values and fundamental British values in lessons and assemblies. Pupils understand that everyone should be treated with respect. Pupils learn about other cultures and religions and celebrate different festivals. However, pupils' and students' knowledge of sex and relationships is not as well developed as it should be.

Students in the sixth form gain nationally recognised qualifications. They build their independence skills well. For example, they learn to travel, shop, cook and to look after themselves. This prepares them well for life after school. Pupils and students learn about the wide range of opportunities available in work and training, including internships and technical qualifications. Even so, leaders do not ensure that pupils and students gain sufficient careers education, advice and guidance to help them to make informed choices about the next steps in their lives.

Leaders consider staff's workload and well-being. Staff are overwhelmingly supportive of senior leaders.

Leaders, including governors and trustees, have an accurate understanding of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. New governors with the appropriate skills and expertise have strengthened the governing body. They challenge and support leaders to ensure the school continues to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in school. Staff are vigilant. They have been trained to remain alert to any change in behaviour or appearance that may indicate that a pupil or student is at risk from harm. Staff are aware of the

procedures to report any concerns about pupils' or students' safety. The safeguarding team works closely with external agencies, including the local authority when required.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and how to be kind and respectful to others.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum does not set out the essential knowledge that children in the early years and pupils and students in the sixth form need to learn and when they need to learn it. This means that many pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should revise their curriculum thinking to ensure that children, pupils and students achieve as well as they should.
- Leaders do not ensure assessment strategies are used consistently well to plan next steps for pupils and students. Staff do not routinely consider the targets in pupils' and students' EHC plans in their curriculum thinking. As a result, pupils' learning does not always build on what they already know as a result. At times, this leads to poor behaviour that disrupts learning. Leaders should ensure that assessment strategies are used consistently well and that staff take account of pupils' and students' needs when designing learning activities.
- The books that pupils and students read do not always match their phonics knowledge. This hampers pupils' and students' ability to read fluently and confidently. Leaders should ensure that children's and pupils' reading books more closely match the phonics that they are learning.
- Leaders do not ensure that pupils and students have timely access to information about careers education, information, advice and guidance. This means that pupils and students are not equipped well enough for their next steps after leaving the school. Leaders should ensure that pupils and students receive the guidance that they need to help them and their families make informed choices about their next steps.

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

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| Unique reference number | 141993 |
| Local authority | Cumbria |
| Inspection number | 10226166 |
| Type of school | All-through special |
| School category | Academy special sponsor-led |
| 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 | 79 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 16 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of governing body | Roger Burns |
| Headteacher | Rachel Slattery |
| Website | www.georgehastwell.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 5 and 6 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- A new headteacher took up post in September 2021.
- Leaders use one unregistered alternative provider.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. The majority of pupils have severe or profound multiple learning difficulties. Some pupils and students also have autism spectrum disorder and speech and language difficulties.
- The school does not meet the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about the full range of education and training options open to them. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other members of staff. Inspectors spoke with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the chair of the governing body and other trust members.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading; communication and language; physical education; and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, spoke with teachers and support staff, spoke with some pupils and students about their learning, listened to pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' and students' work, learning records and EHC plans.
- Inspectors also evaluated other curriculum subjects.
- During the inspection, inspectors reviewed a range of documentation including that relating to safeguarding. They also looked at records of pupils' and students' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with some parents and carers, a representative of the local authority and a school improvement partner.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Julie Bather, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Elaine Parkinson | Ofsted Inspector |

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