

Inspection of Gateacre School

Hedgefield Road, Belle Vale, Liverpool, Merseyside L25 2RW

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 December 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy coming to this friendly and welcoming school. They maintain positive relationships with their teachers. This helps most pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to feel safe.

The school has raised its expectations of pupils' academic achievement. However, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is because there are weaknesses in the design and delivery of the curriculum in some subjects. In addition, the sixth-form programme of study is not broad or ambitious enough. Students do not develop a deep and secure body of knowledge securely over time. This limits their success in their next stage of education, employment or training.

Most pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and during social times. Typically, they abide by the 'Gateacre way' so that they are respectful of others. Most pupils are confident in the approaches that staff use to deal with poor behaviour. Some pupils, including those in the sixth form, do not attend school regularly. As a result, they miss vital learning. This hampers pupils' achievement.

Pupils understand the importance of looking after their physical health. They learn about personal safety and how to take care of their mental health. Some pupils enjoy a range of sporting, drama and musical activities. This encourages them to socialise and make new friends.

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

In recent times, the school has improved the curriculum in Years 7 to 11 so that it is increasingly ambitious. For instance, the profile of languages has been raised. As a result, more pupils are choosing to study a modern foreign language at key stage 4. This means that an increasing proportion of pupils are studying the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects.

In some subjects, the content that pupils will learn is ordered logically. This helps teachers to identify what key knowledge pupils should know and remember. Most teachers deliver the curriculum with confidence and expertise, which in turn means that pupils learn well in these subjects.

In other subjects, the school has not finalised its curriculum thinking. The core knowledge that pupils should gain is not identified well enough for teachers. This restricts them from designing learning that helps pupils to build on what they know. It also has a negative impact on teachers' ability to spot, and then address, gaps in pupils' knowledge. This hinders pupils' academic performance.

The school has effective systems to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Nevertheless, the weaknesses in the design and delivery of the curriculum mean that some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should. The school has improved the way in which it supports pupils who find reading difficult. Gaps in

pupils' reading knowledge are identified as soon as they join the school. Pupils, including pupils with SEND, receive effective support to overcome their reading difficulties. This helps them to become confident and fluent readers.

The systems to manage poor behaviour are applied consistently well by staff. Classrooms are typically calm and orderly. Nonetheless, many pupils are frequently absent from school. They miss out on important knowledge that they need to succeed in subsequent learning. The school has introduced strategies that aim to reduce the absence rate. However, these systems do not address effectively the barriers that some pupils face when coming to school. As a result, some pupils continue to miss school regularly.

There are some opportunities that promote pupils' personal development. For instance, some pupils have opportunities to take on roles of responsibilities, such as peer mentors. These roles promote independence and boost pupils' confidence. Through the personal, social, health and economic curriculum, pupils are encouraged to discuss and debate current affairs in the news. This broadens their understanding of the wider world. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to enjoy enrichment experiences that enhance their curriculum knowledge.

Pupils, including those in the sixth form, receive impartial careers advice. Some sixth-form students visit universities, and most complete work experience. This raises their aspirations and widens their knowledge of future career choices. However, this opportunity is more limited for pupils in key stage 4.

Students in the sixth form do not achieve well. This is because the sixth-form programme of study is not designed effectively. Many students do not complete and gain the qualifications that they need to successfully enter education, employment or training.

The governors understand their roles and statutory duties well. They hold leaders to account and provide sufficient challenge when needed. This has supported the school to accelerate the actions required to improve the quality of education. Staff value the clarification and guidance that are provided when changes are made. This increases their confidence and ability to adopt new policies and strategies. Nonetheless, the school faces some financial constraints beyond its control. This has delayed some of the improvements made to staffing and resources.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has suitable systems to identify pupils who are at risk of harm. Staff know how to report and respond to concerns. The school engages well with external agencies and professionals to support pupils and their families. Despite introducing new systems to record and report concerns, staff have not received training and guidance on how to use these systems effectively. Some staff do not record the actions taken to support pupils as well as they should. This makes it difficult for the

school to evaluate the effectiveness of its safeguarding practices. Even so, this does not place any pupils at risk of harm.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school has not identified the essential knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. This means that some teachers do not know what knowledge to teach pupils, or how to check whether pupils have developed gaps in their learning. The school should ensure that the curriculum is designed effectively so that pupils can build on their learning securely over time.
- The school's system to improve attendance is not effective enough. Many pupils do not attend school as often as they should. These pupils miss crucial learning, which impedes their achievement. The school should strengthen its strategies to support pupils to attend school regularly.
- The system to record the actions that have been taken to address safeguarding concerns is not used effectively. This means that, at times, the school cannot accurately evaluate the effectiveness of how concerns are dealt with. The school should ensure that staff receive training and guidance to help them to keep accurate and clear safeguarding records.
- The sixth-form programme of study does not prepare students adequately for ambitious futures and careers. In addition, some students do not complete their full programme of study. As a result, many students do not progress well into their next stage of education, employment or training. The school should ensure that the programme of study for sixth-form students is suitably broad and ambitious to help pupils succeed in the future.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the

school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	104700
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10294196
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	1,232
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Dave Cadwallader
Headteacher	Gareth Jones
Website	www.gateacre.org
Date of previous inspection	13 July 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school make use of four unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders. Inspectors met with a range of other staff and leaders during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with representatives of the alternative providers that are used by the school.
- Inspectors spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the school improvement partner.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during social times and during movement around the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, English, art and design, Spanish and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders and teachers, visited a sample of lessons, reviewed samples of pupils' work and spoke with some pupils.
- Inspectors also met with subject leaders to review other areas of the curriculum.
- Inspectors spoke with the leaders responsible for personal development, pupil premium, behaviour, early careers teachers, sixth form, SEND and reading.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' self-evaluation, attendance and behaviour records.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils, and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Amina Modan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Scott Maclean	Ofsted Inspector
Jamie Jardine	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Parker	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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