

Inspection of Seaton Academy

High Seaton, Workington, Cumbria CA14 1NP

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 December 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

This school is a stand-alone academy. The headteacher of this school is Robert Barton. This school is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Smith. This means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), get on well together. This makes Seaton Academy a supportive and welcoming place that is held in regard by pupils.

From the start of their time in the Nursery class, children learn how to be a good friend. Pupils are kind and considerate towards each other. They are happy in school.

Pupils are keen to follow the clear guidance for their behaviour in school. They benefit from positive encouragement from caring staff. Pupils take great pride when their efforts are recognised in the assemblies to which their parents are invited.

The recently improved curriculum means that pupils are increasingly motivated to learn. However, in some subjects, pupils, including children in the early years, do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils enjoy the range of clubs on offer, such as cricket, arts and crafts and cookery. Many pupils spoke enthusiastically about the performances they have taken part in as part of the school choir. By carrying out a range of special roles, pupils learn how their actions can help others. For instance, the school council produced a cookbook to raise funds for a local food bank.

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

The increased expectations and ambition of leadership at all levels have contributed considerably to the turnaround of the school's fortunes. No time has been wasted in taking decisive action to tackle the areas of weakness identified at the previous inspection.

The effectiveness of governance has improved greatly. Trustees now have the breadth of experience and expertise to provide support and challenge to hold the school to account for the quality of education. Leadership capacity has been strengthened further through the allocation of clear roles and responsibilities in the staff team.

The curriculum has been reviewed in its entirety. It sets out broad and ambitious aims for all pupils, including those with SEND, and children in the early years. For each subject, the school has identified the important subject content that pupils need to know and remember. This provides clarity for teachers on what should be taught and when this should happen.

The refreshed curriculum is at different stages of implementation. In some subjects, and in some areas of learning in the early years, teachers have received the support and training that they need to deliver subject content with expertise. In these

subjects, teachers present information clearly and help pupils to make links between their learning so that they can build on what they know.

In other subjects, the new curriculums are not having the same impact. Subject leadership in these subjects is in its infancy. This means that staff have not received enough guidance to help them design learning that builds pupils' knowledge over time. It also means that the school does not have an accurate overview of what is working well and what areas of the curriculum require further refinement. This prevents the school from identifying the additional support and resources that staff need in order to deliver subject curriculums consistently well.

Although improving in some subjects, pupils, and children in the early years, do not learn and remember all that they should. Pupils' achievement is hampered further by the gaps in their learning as a result of the previous weak curriculum. The checks on their learning do not identify these gaps well enough. As a result, misconceptions go unnoticed and unaddressed. This hinders pupils from gaining a secure body of knowledge that prepares them well for the next stage of their learning.

The school places reading at the front and centre in the curriculum. As soon as they start in the Nursery class, children are immersed in the joy of books. Through the kind encouragement of staff, children learn to listen carefully and to talk about their ideas. They participate in a variety of familiar rhymes, songs and stories with gusto. This groundwork ensures that children in Reception class get off to a flying start when learning to recognise sounds and their corresponding letters.

The early reading curriculum is well structured. Staff receive the training that they need to deliver the phonics programme consistently well. Pupils practise reading regularly with books that are well matched to the sounds that they know. Pupils who find reading more difficult receive prompt and effective support to help them to catch up. Consequently, most pupils become fluent and confident readers by the end of Year 2. Older pupils enjoy reading independently. They are keen to discuss their favourite books and authors.

Pupils are polite and friendly. Their positive attitudes to learning mean that teachers can deliver the curriculum without disruption. The school identifies the needs of pupils with SEND early and accurately. Teachers have developed their confidence and expertise in adapting the curriculum to ensure that these pupils have access to the same ambitious curriculum as their classmates.

Leaders provide a range of exciting opportunities for pupils to expand their horizons and to develop their understanding of the world beyond their school and local community. Through the curriculum, and in assemblies, pupils learn about people with different backgrounds, faiths and families. This helps them to understand that differences should be respected. Pupils also learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

Staff value the training and support that they have received in recent months. Most staff appreciate the consideration that the school has given to their workload when introducing many changes to the curriculum.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They appreciate the care and opportunities provided for their children. Many parents recognise the improvements at the school and, in particular, the increased approachability of staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school does not have a clear insight into the effectiveness of the new curriculums. This prevents the school from ensuring that teachers receive the support that they need to implement the curriculums well. The school should ensure that it checks the impact of the new curriculums so that it can be assured that pupils are achieving well.
- The impact of the new curriculums on pupils' learning is variable. In some subjects, staff have not had the support or guidance that they need to deliver the curriculums well. This hinders staff from designing learning that helps pupils to learn all that they should. The school should ensure that it equips teachers with the knowledge and skills that they need to deliver the subject curriculums effectively.
- Weaknesses in the previous curriculum have left many pupils with gaps in their knowledge. Teachers' checks on learning do not identify these gaps well enough so that pupils can overcome their misconceptions. This hampers pupils from building their knowledge over time so that they can achieve well. The school should ensure that teachers have the expertise to use assessment strategies effectively to identify and then address gaps in pupils' learning.

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	136285
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10314725
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	188
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Paul Smith
Headteacher	Robert Barton
Website	www.seatonacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 September 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new chair of trustees has been appointed since the previous inspection. All but two trustees have been appointed since October 2022.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- 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.

- The inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other leaders.
- The lead inspector spoke with trustees, including the chair of the trust.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- 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 observed pupils' behaviour around the school and during lessons. They spoke with pupils to discuss their views of school, their learning and their behaviour and safety.
- The inspectors looked closely at some curriculum subjects. These included English, including early reading, mathematics, art and design, science, history and geography. This involved discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visits to lessons and a review of pupils' work. The lead inspector observed some pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of evidence about pupils' attendance, safety and behaviour.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. An inspector also spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. The inspectors also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and for pupils.
- The inspectors considered a range of documents shared by school leaders, including the school improvement plan, leaders' self-evaluation document and the minutes taken at governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Janette Walker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Elaine Mawson

His Majesty's Inspector

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