

Inspection of Seaton Academy

High Seaton, Workington, Cumbria CA14 1NP

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected Seaton Academy as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to Seaton Academy. Staff know pupils well and have forged positive relationships with them. Pupils feel cared for and well supported. They have adults in school that they can talk to about any worries that they may have. They trust adults to deal with their concerns, including any incidents of bullying, swiftly and effectively. Many pupils start the day reading with parents and carers in their classrooms. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe as they arrive at school.

Leaders have high expectations of behaviour for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This is reflected in the positive behaviour and attitudes of pupils. However, pupils do not have the chance to achieve as well as they should. This is because leaders have not thought carefully enough about how to organise pupils' learning.

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should at this school. This is because, over time, leaders have overseen a sharp decline in the quality of education on offer to pupils. Leaders have not taken action to address the weaknesses in the curriculum. They have not acted swiftly enough to make sure that pupils receive a high-quality education.

Pupils understand and embrace the value of friendship. Pupils, including children in the early years, enjoy the opportunity to fill the classroom celebration bucket with examples of kind actions. This helps to remind them about the importance of friendship and how to be kind to one another. Pupils also appreciate the opportunity to think about others. They support the local foodbank and raise money for national and global charities.

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

Trustees do not have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and, as a result, they do not carry out their roles effectively. They have not held leaders to account for the decline in the quality of education since the previous inspection. Trustees offer ineffective challenge and support to school leaders.

Over time, leaders have allowed pupils' achievement to wane. They have taken too little action or ineffectual steps to tackle the weaknesses in the curriculum. Subject leadership is underdeveloped because leaders have not invested in building capacity and expertise across the school. Consequently, pupils do not learn all that they should to be successful. They are not as well prepared as they should be for the next stage of their education. The new headteacher is beginning to take appropriate action to improve the curriculum and halt the decline. However, it is very early days and too soon to see the impact of these actions.

Leaders have constructed a curriculum that is broad and matches the ambition of the national curriculum. The curriculum is designed to give all pupils, including those

with SEND, the knowledge they need to succeed in life. However, leaders have not identified the essential knowledge they want pupils, including children in the early years, to learn. They have not thought carefully about when pupils should acquire this knowledge. This means that pupils do not build knowledge in a logical way from the early years to Year 2.

All pupils, including those with SEND, have access to the same curriculum. Leaders are quick to identify any additional needs that pupils may have. They share this information with staff, so that they can successfully support pupils to learn across the curriculum.

Leaders have not provided effective support or training for teachers, including those in the early years, to gain the knowledge that they need to teach the curriculum well. This leads to some pupils completing activities that do not build their knowledge over time. In some subjects, teachers check what pupils know and can do. They mostly use this information to shape their teaching. However, leaders have not established consistent and effective assessment strategies for teachers to use across the curriculum. This means that teachers are not sure what pupils need to learn in order to reach their curriculum goals.

Leaders have prioritised reading from the early years to Year 2. Children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 enjoy listening to their teachers read to them every day. Pupils read widely and often in and out of school. Leaders are in the process of reviewing the phonics curriculum. Children learn the sounds that letters represent from the beginning of the Reception Year. Those children and pupils who need help with reading are supported to catch up. However, the books that some pupils read do not match the sounds that they are learning in class. As a result, some pupils do not build the phonics knowledge that they need to become confident and fluent readers.

Pupils across the school behave well. They follow the well-established routines that are set in place from the start of their time in the early years. Pupils are keen to learn. They listen carefully to their teachers. Lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. If this does occur, staff have the expertise to successfully help pupils to manage their emotions. Leaders have created a 'cosy cottage' in the school grounds, which provides a safe and nurturing space for pupils to explore their feelings and actions.

Leaders provide opportunities that extend beyond the academic curriculum. Pupils learn about other faiths, beliefs and cultures from the early years through to Year 2. They have an understanding of how people can be different. They talked about these differences with respect and compassion. Pupils enjoy being active citizens in school and in the community. For example, some pupils are school councillors and participate in community events, such as Cumbria in Bloom. Pupils value the opportunity to take part in clubs, such as art and craft, cheerleading, computing and football.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the actions that leaders have taken to prioritise their workload and well-being. Staff feel valued and supported by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have provided training for staff to help them to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Staff know pupils well and are alert to any signs that may indicate they are suffering from harm. Leaders have ensured that there is a clear system for staff to report and record any concerns that they may have. Leaders provide additional support for vulnerable pupils. They also engage with professional agencies to secure help for those pupils and their families.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. For example, pupils are taught what to do if they get lost outside of school. They are also taught how to be safe on and near roads.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Trustees have not held leaders to account for the quality of education across the school or provided effective challenge. As a result, leaders have not taken action to address the weaknesses in the curriculum. This has led to a decline in pupils' achievement. Trustees should ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities, have a better understanding of their role and carry this out effectively by holding leaders to account and providing effective challenge.
- Leaders have not clearly identified the essential knowledge that pupils, including children in the early years, should learn or the order in which it should be taught. This means that some pupils are not able to build on prior learning or progress through the curriculum as they should. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum clearly sets out the knowledge that pupils should learn and when they should learn it.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff receive the support that they need to deliver the curriculum well nor have they developed the expertise of subject leaders. This hinders staff from designing learning that helps pupils to achieve well. Leaders should ensure that all staff, and subject leaders, are given the training that they need to lead and deliver the curriculum confidently and effectively.
- Leaders' systems to assess what pupils know and can do are underdeveloped in many subjects. This means that teachers are not sure how to check what pupils have learned. Leaders should ensure that staff understand the techniques that they should use to identify pupils' knowledge, so that new learning builds pupils' knowledge over time.
- The books that some pupils read do not match the sounds that they are learning. As a result, some pupils do not learn to read with confidence and fluency as

quickly as they should. Leaders should ensure that the reading books that pupils take home closely match the sounds they are learning in school.

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](#)' 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	136285
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10211783
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	189
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Richard Norman
Headteacher	Robert Barton
Website	www.seatonacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Seaton Academy converted to become an academy school in February 2012. When its predecessor school, Seaton Infant School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection. The headteacher took up post in September 2022. There has been some restructuring of the senior leadership team.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- 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.
- During this inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders in school. They also spoke with a range of staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of trustees. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered responses from the staff and pupils to the Ofsted survey.
- The lead inspector examined a range of safeguarding documentation. She checked how leaders ensure that safer recruitment procedures are in place. The lead inspector checked records of staff's safeguarding training. Inspectors spoke to staff to check how well they understand safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at playtimes, in lessons and around school. They also spoke to pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, physical education and computing. They met subject leaders and teachers and visited a sample of lessons. Inspectors spoke with pupils. They also considered the curriculum across some other subject areas and looked at examples of pupils' work. The lead inspector observed pupils reading to trusted adults.

Inspection team

Sally Timmons, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Trish Merritt

Ofsted Inspector

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