

Inspection of an outstanding school: Kilton Thorpe Specialist Academy

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

Inspection dates:

2–3 October 2019

Outcome

Kilton Thorpe Specialist Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Kilton Thorpe Specialist Academy (KTS) is a happy and safe school. Members of staff have a caring and nurturing approach. This encourages pupils to act in a supportive and responsible way. Pupils feel safe. They are tolerant of each other. Any unkind behaviour is extremely rare. Being kind, accepting and helpful are the norm.

Pupils at KTS have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers are especially good at supporting pupils with the most complex needs. These pupils are usually taught in the 'developmental pathway'. Teachers make sure that pupils' physical and learning needs are met. Other pupils are taught in the 'formal pathway'. These pupils also achieve well.

The Rights Respecting Schools Award runs like a rod of iron through KTS. Leaders always take pupils thoughts and feelings into consideration. Teachers put the rights of pupils at the heart of all that they do. For example, the school council has great ideas that teachers take on board. Sports day includes all pupils, whatever their physical needs.

Leaders make sure that they know the exact needs of children when they start school in Reception. Teachers prepare students well for life after school when they leave the sixth form.

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

The school is well led and managed. Pupils are taught in one of two pathways. The developmental pathway is designed for pupils with the most complex needs. The formal pathway is designed for pupils who have moderate or severe SEND. These pupils study different subjects, similar to those in the National Curriculum.

Teachers meet the needs of pupils in the developmental pathway extremely well. Each pupil has an individual plan. These plans include therapies that help pupils' physical development. Teachers map out each tiny step for individual pupils to ensure that they make progress. They look closely at what pupils can do. They cleverly design activities that both interest pupils and help them to develop. Teachers consider pupils' physical, emotional and intellectual development well. They teach the 'whole child'. Members of staff care deeply for pupils and want the very best for them.

This is also the case for pupils in the formal pathway. Teachers know pupils' specific needs and plan for them as individuals. In most subjects, teachers help pupils to learn step by step. Teachers check what pupils can do and build on this. Although this is done well, it is less precise than for pupils in the developmental pathway. Leaders know this. Plans are already in place to help teachers to pinpoint next steps for pupils more precisely.

Staff prioritise the teaching of reading and the development of communication skills. Teachers are very systematic in their approach, and this is successful. Pupils who are able learn to read. Teachers make sure that they develop their understanding of sounds and letters well. Other pupils are helped to appreciate stories and picture books. Teachers help pupils with the most complex needs to appreciate the world around them, using touch, sound and smell. Members of staff use technology, pictures and sign to communicate with pupils at KTS according to their need. They do this very well.

Leaders understand how difficult it can be for some pupils to start school. Teachers work well with parents of children when they start Reception, for example. Leaders ensure that they have as much information as possible to help children to settle into school.

Leaders aim high for pupils at KTS. They are keen to support pupils to develop the skills that they need when they leave school. This is particularly the case for students in the sixth form. The community café is an example of this. Teachers help students to develop life skills by planning the menu, preparing food, and serving customers. Students develop other skills well, such as using transport independently. Many students study a range of subjects and gain qualifications that help them when they move to college. Students with the most complex needs are well supported as they move on after school.

Leaders want pupils at KTS to experience life to the full. Pupils have a wide range of experiences while at school. Pupils take part in Boccia competitions, visit the local library, listen to live music performances and enjoy pantomimes. Many take part in residential visits. Pupils have a voice at KTS. They wrote the 'bullying charter' and designed the poster that helps other pupils know how to challenge any unkind behaviour.

Parents are positive about the school. Teachers are fully committed to the school and its pupils. Leaders know that there are major strengths in the school and that there is some work still to do. Leaders, although new to post, are not new to KTS. They have a record of spotting where improvements are needed and sorting them out.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are diligent when it comes to their safeguarding responsibilities. They are well trained. They take timely action when working with external agencies to ensure pupils' safety. They push hard to ensure that pupils receive the support that they need and deserve.

Staff are aware of the additional physical and emotional needs of pupils. They are trained to help pupils to move safely from wheelchairs to standing frames, for example. Staff are sensitive when it comes to intimate needs, such as toileting. Pupils not only feel safe, they feel respected.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders and teachers understand how to plan for the needs of pupils with complex or profound SEND very effectively. They ensure that these pupils' physical and emotional needs are met. Teachers plan for the small, incremental steps needed in their pupils' cognitive and physical development. Leaders should ensure that plans are as precise for pupils in the formal pathway, and that subject content is sequenced equally well across subjects.
- Many teachers have strong subject and specialist knowledge to help them to support pupils to achieve well. Leaders should ensure that members of staff have the support and training needed to implement the curriculum in the formal pathway even more effectively.

Background

When we have judged a special school, pupil referral unit or maintained nursery school to be outstanding we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Kilton Thorpe Specialist Academy to be outstanding on 14–15 July 2015.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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 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	10110864
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	162
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	30
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ian Bowman
Headteacher	Brian Richardson
Website	www.kts-academy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 July 2015

Information about this school

- Kilton Thorpe Specialist Academy is a special school for pupils with moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher and a new deputy headteacher have been appointed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. We talked to curriculum leaders. We met members of the governing body, including the chair.
- We met with those responsible for safeguarding. We looked at a range of documentation linked to safeguarding, including: child protection policies and procedures; absence data; documentation about the use of restrictive physical

intervention; and exclusions data. We talked to pupils during the inspection and asked them about how safe they feel.

- We looked at reading and communication, mathematics, physical development and computing in detail. We talked to leaders and teachers about their curriculum plans. We spoke to pupils about their learning. We also looked at pupils' work. We looked at what children in the early years can do and we looked at students' work in the sixth form.
- We took into account the 25 responses to Ofsted's online parents' questionnaire, Parent View, and the 86 responses to the survey for staff.

Inspection team

Michael Wardle, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Penny

Ofsted Inspector

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