

Inspection of South Lakes Academy

Riverside Centre, Yard 39, Highgate, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 4ED

Inspection dates: 21–23 January 2020

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff have created a safe and happy place for pupils. Some pupils attend for only a short period of time. Others stay at the school for longer. Regardless of how long they are at the school, they receive a warm welcome. This helps pupils to settle in quickly and start to learn.

Pupils know their teachers expect them to behave well. Pupils are respectful to teachers and to visitors. Leaders and teachers want pupils to achieve well. Pupils usually listen carefully and try hard with their work. They know that staff will help them if they do not understand anything.

Pupils are proud of their achievements. Pupils we spoke with told us about the difference the school has made for them. They typically commented: 'I hated maths – I didn't get it. But I came here and I got it.'

Pupils have opportunities to take part in sporting activities away from the school site. Some learn to swim with greater confidence. Others play golf or go hiking in the Lake District. These activities help them to develop healthy lifestyles.

Leaders and teachers keep pupils safe from bullying. Pupils know that it is not acceptable. They trust their teachers to resolve any difficulties that occur.

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

The headteacher and staff know their pupils well. They understand the many barriers to learning that pupils have faced in the past. Nonetheless, they have high aspirations for pupils. The curriculum they have designed reflects these aspirations.

Many pupils arrive at South Lakes Academy with significant gaps in their English and mathematics learning. Leaders have therefore made English and mathematics a priority. Nevertheless, the curriculum is broad and rich and meets the independent school standards. The school currently has no provision for external examinations. However, the curriculum enables pupils, where appropriate, to work towards BTEC functional skills or GCSEs in a range of subjects.

In English, pupils read a range of high-quality texts, such as the letters written by Pliny the Younger in Roman times. These texts introduce pupils to new words and to more exciting ways of writing. Teachers are skilled at supporting pupils to understand the meaning of these texts. This helps pupils to make their own writing more interesting. Pupils were proud to show us the work in their books. They could explain how their writing had improved since coming to the school. Pupils are keen to learn and this is reflected in their behaviour in class.

Pupils learn well in mathematics. Teachers provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their mathematical skills. Pupils have no hesitation in using

their mathematical skills to develop and enhance their learning in other subjects. Pupils develop confidence in mathematics as a result of these experiences.

Learning in food technology lessons is lively and engaging. Pupils learn about the nutritional value of different foods. They also build on their learning from other subjects. For example, pupils use mathematical skills to measure and calculate ingredients. They learn about other cultures and beliefs by discussing traditional foods and cooking methods.

In science, pupils currently study physics or biology. Pupils learn about electricity circuits in physics, and predators in biology. The design of the curriculum in both of these subjects prepares them well for future external examinations.

Teachers usually make effective use of assessments. This helps teachers to identify any misunderstandings or gaps in pupils' knowledge. Occasionally, teachers do not revisit what pupils have learned previously. When this happens, teachers are unable to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge.

The curriculum supports pupils' personal development. Pupils receive impartial careers information and guidance. Pupils learn about current affairs, different faiths and healthy lifestyles. However, they have few chances to discuss these matters with each other, or to experience working collaboratively. This limits the opportunities they have to take account of the views and needs of others.

The school's cohort is small and pupils' needs are wide ranging. The majority of pupils have an education, health and care plan. The headteacher makes sure that the curriculum meets the needs of all of these pupils. She and her staff build strong, respectful relationships with pupils. Pupils told us that these relationships have helped them improve their behaviour, in and out of school.

Staff speak highly of the headteacher's leadership. They say they appreciate her concern for their well-being. Staff have regular training in safeguarding and first aid. However, plans to improve teachers' subject and assessment knowledge are not as well developed.

The headteacher is also the school's proprietor. She has provided a bright, attractive learning environment for staff and pupils. The classroom is well lit and comfortable. Resources are well organised and displays support pupils' learning. The headteacher has ensured that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The school's new website provides a wide range of information about the school's policies and procedures. The headteacher ensures that she and her staff follow all health and safety requirements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established effective working relationships with other professionals. This helps them to share important information about pupils' welfare.

Staff know how to recognise when pupils are at risk of harm. There are clear procedures for them to follow should they have any concerns. The school's records show that staff use these procedures well.

Leaders follow appropriate procedures for the appointment of new staff. They carry out a range of safeguarding checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with young people.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- On a very small number of occasions, teachers do not assess carefully enough whether pupils have understood and remembered their earlier learning. This means that on these few occasions, the extent of pupils' understanding is not explored sufficiently to reveal any gaps. Leaders now need to ensure that teachers consistently establish how well pupils have understood and retained earlier knowledge so that future learning builds securely upon what pupils know.
- Although leaders have ensured that teachers have regular safeguarding and first-aid training, they have not yet developed clear plans for improving teachers' subject knowledge and their use of assessment. Leaders need to establish clear plans to improve further teachers' knowledge and skills, in order to enhance the teaching of the curriculum and the appropriate use of assessment.
- Pupils have few meaningful opportunities to share their views or to work together collaboratively. This limits the occasions when they can discuss and debate issues in a considered way and engage with the views of others. Leaders now need to explore ways of widening these opportunities, in order to strengthen further this important aspect of pupils' personal development.

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 (DfE) has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	147237
DfE registration number	909/6016
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10128831
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 21
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Number of part-time pupils	12
Proprietor	Tunde Christie
Headteacher	Tunde Christie
Annual fees (day pupils)	approximately £30,000
Telephone number	01539 738248
Website	www.southlakesacademy.org
Email address	tchristie@southlakesacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school was registered with the Department for Education on 30 July 2019. This is its first standard inspection.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- Pupils at this school mostly have social, emotional and mental health issues.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- During the inspection, we spoke with the headteacher and members of staff. Discussions were held that focused on safeguarding arrangements.
- A range of documentation was reviewed, including that relating to the independent school standards, the curriculum, special educational needs and/or disabilities, safeguarding and the checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.
- We spoke to pupils about their work and school life. I also spoke to a parent on the telephone and to a project worker from a charitable trust.
- The inspection focused in detail on English, mathematics, science and food technology. For each of these subjects, we held discussions with leaders and teachers, visited lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work and talked with pupils.

Inspection team

Mavis Smith, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Linda Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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