

Spalding Academy

Neville Avenue, Spalding, Lincolnshire PE11 2EJ

Inspection dates

4–5 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive headteacher and other senior leaders provide clear direction and strong leadership. The school has improved rapidly.
- School leaders and those responsible for governance know their school well. They are well informed about the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, plans for further improvement do not have clear criteria to allow them to measure success.
- Leaders have taken decisive and effective action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which is now good.
- The progress pupils make across the curriculum has improved and is now good, particularly in key stage 4.
- Trustees are knowledgeable and dedicated. They provide a good balance of support and challenge. The school benefits from the opportunities provided by working as part of a trust.
- The curriculum is well matched to the needs of the pupils and ensures that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Pupils receive good advice and support.
- Pupils' behaviour is a strength of the school. They are polite and enthusiastic and display good attitudes to learning. Bullying or disruptive behaviour is very rare. These few instances are dealt with effectively by staff.
- Pupils' attendance is good and contributes to their strong progress. The attendance of all groups is at least in line with the national average.
- Groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are well supported by the school and make good progress.
- Leaders have developed accurate systems of assessment. Teachers use these effectively to identify the next steps in learning for pupils.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Leaders and staff have created an atmosphere of care and support and are determined to do their best for each pupil.
- Pupils in key stage 3 do not make as much progress as pupils in key stage 4 because they are not challenged consistently well.
- Although pupils' literacy skills are developing, there are limited opportunities for pupils to use these across the curriculum.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders and those responsible for governance set clear milestones for further improvement to help them to measure success and realise their ambition for the school.
- Ensure that teaching enables pupils to secure consistently good progress across all subjects and particularly in lower key stage 3 by:
 - providing appropriate challenge for pupils so that all groups make strong progress
 - implementing effective strategies to enable boys to match the stronger progress made by girls.
- Develop pupils' ability to apply a wider range of literacy skills across the curriculum, particularly their use of spelling strategies.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher and the leadership team have acted with determination to improve the quality of education that the school provides. Leaders have a well-informed and accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and use this knowledge to guide their plans for improvement.
- Leaders have high aspirations for pupils' achievement. They have created a culture built on shared values and the belief that all pupils can achieve well. Progress has improved for all groups of pupils in the school, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- Senior leaders from within the trust have brought rigour to the setting of targets and use of assessment. They have an accurate view of how well pupils are achieving and the quality of provision. This information is used well to identify areas for improvement.
- Leadership of teaching and learning has brought about sustained improvement. Professional development is well targeted and effective and has helped teachers to improve their skills. Good practice is recognised and celebrated, and underperformance challenged. Newly qualified teachers receive good support.
- Leaders have developed a strong vision for the curriculum, which is based firmly on the individual context of the school and its pupils. It is broad and balanced, and helps pupils develop a good range of knowledge and skills. There is a well-thought-out balance between academic and vocational qualifications which enables all pupils to succeed.
- Leaders make good use of additional funding that the school receives to support pupils with SEND. There is a wide range of strategies in place, such as a registration group for vulnerable pupils to enable them to have a calm and positive start to the day, supported by careful management and tracking of their progress.
- Leaders consistently promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, including the promotion of fundamental British values, through a well-structured programme of activities, including trips to local places of worship and dedicated days to address important topics such as knife crime. This contributes to the school being a harmonious community.
- Equality of opportunity and diversity are successfully promoted, both within the formal citizenship programme and through the ethos and environment of the school. As a result, prejudiced behaviour is rare and dealt with swiftly when it does arise.
- Parents, carers, pupils and staff recognise the improvements made by the school and are highly supportive of leaders. Parents particularly appreciate the school's pastoral care. A typical comment from one parent described the way their son has 'gained massively in confidence thanks to the school's nurturing environment'.
- Although the quality of teaching has improved, leaders of teaching have not yet ensured that provision in all areas, especially in lower key stage 3, is as effective as in other parts of the school. Leaders' evaluations of teaching of these age groups are overgenerous.

- Work is well under way to develop the school's website. However, it does not yet contain all the information it should.
- Whole-school evaluation and improvement plans, particularly the documents shared with governors and trustees, lack detail and clear milestones.

Governance of the school

- The trust provides timely and effective support for both leadership and governance. The school shares expertise with the partner school to good effect.
- Those responsible for governance are well informed and have a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They hold leaders to account and communicate their ambition to staff and others in the school community.
- Trustees and governors are skilled, knowledgeable and well trained, including about safeguarding. The board has a good blend of expertise and experience. They have a clear view of what makes a good school and their role in helping the school improve and develop.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a culture of vigilance at the school which leads to highly effective systems of safeguarding. Pupils report that they feel safe. The school successfully addresses safeguarding issues, including protecting pupils from radicalisation and extremist views, through robust systems, staff training, lessons and special events.
- The school carries out all the necessary checks on staff and volunteers and keeps detailed up-to-date records. Diligent records illustrate the appropriate and timely actions that the school takes to support and monitor vulnerable pupils.
- Safeguarding training for staff and governors is thorough and up to date. Staff know what to do if they have concerns, and leaders can demonstrate how they deal with them in an efficient and timely way.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good. This confirms leaders' own evaluation. Teaching in key stage 4 is particularly strong, which enables pupils to be well prepared for examinations and for the next steps in their education.
- The improved quality of teaching has had a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils focus well and show positive attitudes to their learning. Teachers support pupils well in lessons, monitoring and intervening to keep them on track.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and use a range of strategies to support pupils' learning. They plan appropriate activities which consider the needs of pupils at different levels of ability.
- Teachers ensure that pupils know how to improve their work. Pupils are given time to reflect on assessment, and this enables them to address misconceptions and develop their understanding of the topic.

- Homework makes an effective contribution to pupils' learning. It is used by teachers to develop pupils' understanding and to practise their skills. It is set and completed regularly, and pupils understand its value.
- Teachers use a wide variety of approaches, depending on the nature of the subject matter. Practical subjects are delivered in an engaging way that captures pupils' interest and enthusiasm.
- Teaching assistants support pupils' learning well, particularly pupils with SEND. As a result, these pupils make good progress alongside their peers in lessons.
- Teachers are keen to improve their practice through training and professional development. This has had a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Occasionally, in Year 7 and 8, activities are not always sufficiently challenging. When this occurs, some pupils lose concentration.
- Standards of presentation, particularly in boys' books, are sometimes inconsistent.
- Although there were some excellent examples of literacy development, this is not yet consistent across the curriculum. Teachers do not always expect pupils to use strategies that they know to check and improve their spelling.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The well-being of pupils, both physically and emotionally, is a priority for the school. Parents are positive about the way the school cares for their children, and staff are determined to support them. Parents particularly highlight the way pupils are supported when they first join the school.
- Pupils feel positive about their education and are proud of their school. They are polite, confident and self-assured. Their strong attitudes to learning have contributed to the improved progress they have made across the curriculum.
- Staff communicate well with parents, particularly the parents of vulnerable pupils or those who are experiencing difficulty in their lives. Staff are determined to make sure that individual support is provided where necessary.
- The school has a very effective approach to combat bullying, based on a culture of highly visible staff presence around the school. Pupils report that bullying is rare and they are confident that any occurrence is dealt with effectively. They know who to go to if they have concerns or worries and feel sure that they will be listened to and helped.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the detailed and wide-ranging personal, social, health education and citizenship programme. They have learned how to manage risks, for example how to stay safe online.
- Pupils receive well-targeted and thorough careers advice throughout their time in school. This helps them to prepare for the next steps after leaving the school. As a

result, in the last year all leavers went on to an appropriate work or study placement. The school works with a range of partners to provide high-quality advice and guidance.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are proud to be at the school and want to do well. Relationships are very strong, both between pupils and between pupils and staff. The school is a positive and harmonious community.
- Pupils are courteous and helpful around the school. The school environment is orderly and pupils conduct themselves well, both in lessons and around the site, including at social times. Staff are well supported in lessons by senior leaders and the behaviour team, and this contributes to very low levels of disruptive behaviour.
- Attendance is improving for all pupils. Persistent absence has declined. No groups are disadvantaged by low attendance. Staff maintain comprehensive attendance tracking information and use this information well to address any issues at an early stage. Attendance levels are broadly in line with the national averages.
- Leaders evaluate records about behaviour to resolve problems quickly. They check that the policy is applied consistently.
- Exclusions are rare. The number of permanent exclusions has declined significantly over a three-year period. Leaders work closely with the local authority and other schools to ensure that the school is inclusive.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, Year 11 pupils at the school made progress that was slightly above the national average. Inspection evidence and analysis of the information the school collects about pupils' progress indicate that this improvement has been sustained in the current year.
- Year 11 attainment, including that of disadvantaged pupils, improved in 2018.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work in books indicates that they are making consistently good progress across almost all subjects, including English and mathematics. This is consistent with the school's own assessment information regarding pupil progress.
- Most groups of current pupils are now making good progress from their starting points. The progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved. Pupils with SEND now make strong progress. Leaders use a range of strategies to support pupils in need of catch-up support in English and mathematics when they join the school. This has a notable impact on the progress that these pupils make.
- Pupils have frequent opportunities to read and the library is a valued resource. However, opportunities for pupils to develop and apply literacy skills across the curriculum are not always taken.
- Although boys make progress that is broadly in line with the national average, they make weaker progress than girls in the school, and the in-school gap is widening.

- There is a robust and effective careers strategy in place, which gives pupils a range of options and support. As a result, destinations are positive and pupils are well prepared for their next stage of learning.

School details

Unique reference number	144488
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10087312

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,015
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	William Hawkins
Executive headteacher	Lucy Conley
Telephone number	01775 722484
Website	www.spaldingacademy.org.uk
Email address	enquiries@spaldingacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Spalding Academy is an average-sized secondary school.
- The school is part of a small educational trust, the South Lincolnshire Academies Trust, which comprises Spalding Academy and Bourne Academy. The school has a local advisory board, which reports to the board of trustees. The executive headteacher leads both schools.
- Most pupils are from a White British background, with a significant minority from other White backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is broadly average.
- There are no pupils who have alternative arrangements for their education with external providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 42 lessons throughout the school and in a range of subjects. Some lessons were jointly observed with school leaders.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, senior and middle leaders and members of the board of trustees and the local advisory board. An inspector also spoke with a local authority officer.
- Inspectors considered the 48 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 43 free-text responses from parents.
- The inspection team listened to the views of pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 during discussions.
- Inspectors considered the 70 responses to a staff questionnaire and talked with staff during the inspection to seek their views.

Inspection team

Paul Heery, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Sammy	Ofsted Inspector
Lynn Cox	Ofsted Inspector
Nigel Boyd	Ofsted Inspector

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