

Southmoor Academy

Ryhope Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR2 7TF

Inspection dates 26–27 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students' academic achievement is good and previous areas of underachievement have been tackled well.
- The percentage of students gaining 5 or more passes at GCSE at grade A* to C including English and mathematics has been above that found nationally for the last three years. Secure evidence provided by the academy shows this trend continuing to rise in 2014 and beyond.
- The academy has focused robustly on the improvement of teaching. Teaching is now mostly good across the academy and some is outstanding.
- Students who need extra help to catch up are given effective support, with particular excellence in reading. As a result, the gaps in attainment between different groups are closing and almost all groups of students achieve well.
- The great majority of students are keen to learn and behave well. Their personal and cultural development benefits from an extensive range of opportunities to debate and discuss sensitive issues across the whole curriculum.
- The academy is very effective in teaching students the importance of safety. This includes their behaviour on-line.
- The leadership team has relentlessly prioritised the raising of standards and improving the quality of teaching. The academy development plan is sharply focused on improving outcomes for all students.
- The governing body supports the academy very well and offers a good degree of challenge.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. Consequently, students' progress is good rather than outstanding.
- Some teaching does not use assessment information effectively to ensure that the work is hard enough to stretch and extend all students.
- A small number of students in Key Stage 3 do not concentrate well in lessons and have poor listening skills.
- Progress in science requires improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 38 lessons taught by 38 teachers. Two of these lessons were jointly observed with academy leaders. Inspectors visited classrooms during tutor time, attended an assembly and made short visits to a number of lessons across the academy.
- Meetings were held with six groups of students with further discussions taking place with the Chair of governors, the principal, associate principal, other members of the senior leadership team and key subject and pastoral leaders.
- Inspectors took account of 49 responses to the on-line questionnaire for parents (Parent View) and to staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work by looking at progress and attainment information, the academy improvement plan and the academy’s own analysis of its performance. Inspectors also looked at the system for managing the performance of staff and minutes from meetings of the governing body.
- The inspection team undertook a detailed analysis of the files and workbooks of students in Years 8 and 10.

Inspection team

John Townsley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Heather Scott	Additional Inspector
Lynne Horton	Additional Inspector
Michael Blaylock	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Southmoor Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 May 2012. When its predecessor school, Southmoor Community School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The academy is slightly larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs supported by school action is below average. The proportion of students supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, students known to be eligible for free school meals, or those who have a parent in the armed forces, is higher than the national average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Eight students are currently educated off-site through Hendon Young People's Project.
- The academy has approval to open a new sixth form provision from September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching by making sure that:
 - assessment information is used effectively to plan activities that are hard enough to ensure that all students are stretched and extend their learning
 - students' listening and concentration skills are fully developed, particularly in Years 7 and 8
 - high quality marking is properly understood and acted upon by all students
 - students' eagerness to learn is taken full advantage of by encouraging them to question and think deeply, and by involving them in reflecting on their learning.
- Improve progress in science so that it is as good as progress in English and mathematics by ensuring that teaching is consistently good or better.
- Ensure that all students are required to apply themselves properly and to concentrate well in all subjects, particularly at Key Stage 3.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Academy data, evidence from lesson observations, discussions with students and detailed work scrutiny show that students are making good progress. Their good achievement is a result of increasingly strong teaching and the very effective targeted support of students most at risk of underachieving. Most parents and carers who responded to the on-line questionnaire believe that their children make good progress.
- Students join the academy with average overall standards and by the end of Year 11 the proportion securing 5 GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics is above average. This is predicted to rise further in 2014.
- The percentage of students gaining A* to C grades in 2013 was above or significantly above average in a wide range of subjects, but the percentage of students gaining A* or A grades was much weaker. The academy has taken decisive action to tackle this. Inspection evidence from lesson observations, work scrutiny and the analysis of staff training, as well as the academy's own data, shows that all students including the most able are on track to attain grades of which they are capable this year.
- The most able students now achieve well because the work they are given is much harder, and tightly linked to the assessment criteria for the very highest grades.
- GCSE results in science are lower than those achieved in English and mathematics and across the rest of the curriculum. The academy understands why this is the case and is very effectively addressing the problem. The academy's system to track students' attainment and progress demonstrates that science results are set to improve strongly in 2014. Though the teaching seen in science continues to be variable a significant proportion is outstanding, supporting the view that progress in science, though not yet good, is improving rapidly.
- During the previous academic year students were entered for GCSE mathematics early but this is no longer the case. The policy of early entry has been stopped to ensure, in particular, that the most able students are able to secure A* and A grades.
- Students known to be eligible for free school meals do not do as well as other students. In 2013 their average attainment was one grade lower in English and just over one grade lower in mathematics. The progress of students known to be eligible for free school meals has been slower than that of other students. However, information provided by the academy and confirmed by other inspection evidence, indicates that these gaps in attainment and progress are narrowing rapidly.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress because they receive highly effective additional help. The academy's work in supporting weaker readers is particularly strong.
- The very small number of students who attend alternative provision make good progress. The academy checks on their progress and attendance rigorously.
- Students are prepared well for the next stages in their education, training and employment. The academy pays close attention to the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills and recognises the weakness in listening skills of some younger students. Excellent practice in the development of students' extended writing was seen in geography and history.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching is now ensuring that students make good progress. Some teaching is outstanding but there is some that requires improvement.
- Expectations of students' learning and progress are usually high and students learn effectively, developing their knowledge and skills quickly. This was well illustrated in a Year 8 mathematics lesson for lower ability students on transformations in which interesting and engaging shape enlargements required students to carry out some very challenging mental arithmetic. The

teacher was also very effective in developing the knowledge of students through encouraging them to explore alternative methods of calculation.

- Where teaching is outstanding, as it was in a Year 9 English lesson, detailed planning ensured that all students made exceptional progress. Probing and exceptionally well-planned questioning accelerated the progress of students in their understanding of a challenging text and in the debating of sensitive issues relating to social and cultural understanding.
- Learning is less effective when few opportunities are provided for students to reflect on their learning and the questions that teachers ask are not always challenging enough. As a result, students sometimes miss opportunities to deepen their understanding. Some teaching does not use assessment information effectively to ensure that the work is hard enough to stretch and extend all students.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well across the curriculum. In a Year 9 geography lesson, students were extremely interested in a discussion around the causes of global poverty with many making incisive contributions and all listening with great intent.
- Students' work is marked regularly and accurately. In English, geography and history there are excellent examples of students responding thoughtfully to marking and improving their work as a consequence. In some subject areas, for example science and design and technology, students are not given the chance to respond to marking. As a result there is little evidence of students improving their work.
- Students with special educational needs and those known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium are taught well. Very effective additional help and targeted programmes are matched closely to individual needs and these students make good progress as a result.
- Most parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire felt that their children are taught well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are polite and courteous to adults and respectful to each other. In lessons, the great majority of students work well in teams and groups and are keen to contribute and listen to the ideas of others.
- A small number of students in Key Stage 3 are un-enthusiastic about their learning and this is reflected in their poor attitudes in some lessons. The students concerned are often off task and do not listen carefully to the ideas of others.
- Students are particularly positive about the vertical tutoring structure which mixes students from Years 7 to 11 in form groups. They believe that this has helped to improve relationships and that older students are very effective in supporting younger ones in tutor time.
- Students told inspectors that they enjoy coming to the academy which they described as 'welcoming and encouraging' and as having 'a good community spirit'. They wear their uniform with pride, are punctual to lessons and arrive keen to learn.
- Students have an excellent understanding of different types of bullying, including homophobic and racist bullying. They say that little bullying occurs and that when it does happen it is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- The large majority of parents and carers feel the academy deals effectively with bullying though a small number of concerns were raised with how behaviour sanctions and rewards are consistently applied.
- Students' attendance has been below national averages. New leadership in this area and the impact of pupil premium funding has resulted in significant improvements in attendance this year. Persistent absence has also been reduced and is now in line with national averages.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. They look after each other very well and are very welcoming to students who are new to the academy. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet.

- Students worked very safely during the many practical lessons observed during the inspection. They also behaved sensibly and safely during a range of extra-curricular activities which included a lunchtime swimming club.

The leadership and management are good

- The principal, associate principal and senior leadership team have a clear understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. They have acted successfully to bring about improvement in students' achievement and the quality of teaching at a rapid rate. Leadership of behaviour and teaching are particularly strong.
- Leaders are working effectively to disseminate excellent practice in teaching and to challenge less effective performance. Middle leaders are now emerging as a very effective group. They check performance of students and teachers well in their areas and use the information to focus development where it is most needed.
- Senior and middle leaders are themselves good and outstanding teachers and, consequently, are able to act as role models in the development of excellent practice.
- The vast majority of staff are extremely positive about all aspects of the academy's work and many took the opportunity to voice their views to inspectors.
- Systems for tracking students' progress are highly effective. Underachievement is picked up early and the extra support that is provided has a clear and positive impact.
- The range of subjects and experiences provided by the academy gives students a secure grounding in the skills of English and mathematics and now provides them with the qualifications they need to move successfully into continuing education, training or employment.
- The monitoring of pupil premium funding is effective and its impact is clearly measured. As a result of that analysis leaders have helped students more through the use of additional adults and a highly successful reading initiative.
- Leaders are ambitious and aspirational for the students of the academy. The curriculum is now much more academically challenging. Through its successful application to open a sixth form provision, the academy has shown its determination to make changes that they believe will benefit students.
- Safeguarding meets requirements. The academy is vigilant in looking after all its students, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors visit the academy regularly and know the staff well. They give their time generously and bring individual professional expertise and personal skills to the academy.
- They ensure that leaders at all levels are appropriately supported and challenged and are able to provide good examples of where they have challenged or modified the strategic direction of the academy.
- The work of the governing body as reflected in the record of its meetings shows that they assess the impact of expenditure, including the use of pupil premium funding, very effectively.
- The governing body knows about the quality of teaching in the academy and understands how well students are achieving. They monitor teachers' performance, ensure that good teachers are properly rewarded and withhold pay awards where they are not merited. Governors are very effective in checking leaders' work in tackling weaker teaching and in ensuring that teaching is improved.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138103
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	425968

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	971
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Brown
Principal	Phil Ingram
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2008
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