

Sheffield Springs Academy

Hurlfield Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S12 2SF

Inspection dates 30 September–1 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The proportion of students that make expected progress or good progress in English and mathematics is below that seen nationally. Recent rapid improvements in the quality of teaching in both subjects have not been enough to overcome the extensive underachievement that took place prior to the last inspection. Improvements are more rapid in English than mathematics.
- While gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged students and their peers are narrowing, the picture is not yet sufficiently consistent across different subjects and key stages.
- A minority of teaching is not strong enough to deliver good progress. Not all teachers use information on students' prior attainment sufficiently to ensure they set tasks that challenge all students. Although teachers mark students' work regularly, students do not routinely respond to comments and improve their work.
- Not all students show positive attitudes to learning and there remains a small amount of low level disruption to learning where teaching fails to engage sufficient interest.
- Levels of attendance are rising but remain below the national average.
- The impact of middle leaders is inconsistent. Some middle leaders lack the skills needed to drive improvements in the quality of teaching.
- The curriculum in the sixth form is too narrow. Consequently, some students are required to find other suitable provision to pursue their chosen subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders and governors have successfully tackled a culture of negativity and failure, and instilled a positive ethos based on core values and principles. They have secured stable staffing and there is a shared commitment across the staff to sustain improvements and become a good school.
- Arrangements to keep students safe and secure are good. Members of staff are trained to a high level and there is well coordinated support for students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable.
- Students' progress in Key Stage 3 is now good across a range of subjects including English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 part lessons, six of which observations were undertaken with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also visited some lessons for short periods, scrutinised a selection of mathematics books and observed the behaviour and conduct of students in and around the academy.
- Meetings were held with the Executive Principal, senior leaders, middle leaders and a group of teachers. Further meetings were held with governors and representatives of the academy’s sponsor.
- Inspectors spoke to students in lessons and at various times during each day. They also spoke formally to groups of students on the second day of the inspection.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including attendance, exclusion and behaviour information, quality assurance checks on the quality of teaching, performance management information, reports to governors and minutes of governing body meetings. They reviewed a range of policies, including those aimed at keeping students safe.
- The inspection team took account of 48 staff questionnaires and of the academy’s own survey of parents’ opinions. There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for inspectors to analyse.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Katrina Gueli

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Clive Hurren

Additional Inspector

Steven Beverley

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Sheffield Springs Academy is of broadly similar size to other secondary schools.
- The academy is sponsored by United Learning.
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is well above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding provided for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of students supported at school action is above the national average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with an education, health and care plan is well above the national average.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards which sets out the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A relatively small number of students access vocational facilities at Wingfield Academy. The courses they follow are taught by members of staff from Sheffield Springs Academy.
- There have been considerable changes to staffing since the academy was last inspected, including a number of changes to leadership positions.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in order to raise attainment and increase rates of progress, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently provide appropriately challenging work for all students, especially disadvantaged students, so that they make good progress
 - students routinely respond to marking and improve their work
 - mathematics lessons consistently deepen students' knowledge and understanding of underlying concepts and regularly provide opportunities for students to solve problems
 - there are more frequent planned opportunities for students to use and apply mathematics in other subjects.
- Further improve behaviour and increase levels of attendance by:
 - ensuring that all students develop consistently positive attitudes to learning
 - relentlessly implementing strategies to improve attendance, so that levels of absence fall below those seen nationally.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all middle leaders have the skills to drive improvements in the quality of teaching within their areas of responsibility
 - further narrowing gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and their peers
 - ensuring access to a broader curriculum in the sixth form, so that there is greater opportunity for students to progress onto post-16 courses within the academy.

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, the Executive Principal has built an effective and committed leadership team that is relentlessly addressing areas of underperformance. Together they have overturned a culture of negativity and failure that previously permeated the academy. There is now a positive culture. Members of staff are committed to delivering improvements, and students are increasingly proud of their school.
- Senior leaders have accurately evaluated the academy's performance and have identified what needs to be done to further improve the school. Consequently, there are good plans for improvement in place designed to take the academy through to 2016.
- The leadership of teaching is much improved. Inadequate teaching has been relentlessly challenged and almost all has been eradicated. Teachers now receive better quality and more tailored professional development. External support has been used effectively to support weaker teachers and this is resulting in more teaching that is good.
- Teachers have had opportunities to visit other schools and see best practice elsewhere. As a result the academy has developed enough good and outstanding practice to drive further improvements itself. Students told inspectors the quality of teaching is now much better than it was at the time of the last inspection.
- Senior leaders and governors have managed the performance of staff robustly. Teachers are set meaningful objectives that reflect the academy's core values and aspirations. Where these are not met, pay progression is withheld.
- The quality of middle leadership is developing. The strongest middle leaders are contributing effectively to monitoring and promoting improvement. They know the strengths and weaknesses of their departments and use meetings to support, challenge and develop colleagues effectively. For example, in science, the department has successfully moved from BTEC to more challenging GCSE courses, raised standards and increased the take-up of the subject. However, the quality of middle leadership is inconsistent and some middle leaders are less effective than others in improving teaching.
- The development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural values has been fundamental to improving the ethos that now pervades the academy. Relationships between staff and students are now good. Students are polite and show respect for one another. There are well-planned opportunities within the curriculum and in assemblies for students to reflect upon and discuss topical issues, and develop a sense of right and wrong.
- Since the last inspection there has been considerable change to the curriculum. There are well-planned opportunities to address gaps in literacy and numeracy at Key Stage 3 and more Key Stage 4 courses now lead to GCSE examinations rather than BTEC qualifications. This is helping to raise students' aspirations and ambition which, in turn, is raising levels of achievement.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Rigorous checks are undertaken when staff are appointed. Staff are well trained in child protection and referrals are managed effectively. The academy has strengthened its support for students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable to underachievement with the addition of a team of trained social workers and an attendance officer. As a result, child protection cases are skilfully handled and students receive good support through the academy and its partners.
- The sponsor has provided good support and ensured that the academy has had the necessary resources to address areas of underperformance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - While the academy has been judged to require special measures an improvement board of governors has provided consistent challenge and effective strategic leadership. A shadow governing body has been established, with the expectation that it will take up the responsibilities for governance in the near future. Members of the school improvement board are very knowledgeable about the progress the academy has made.
 - Governors have worked hard to engage parents and have increased the level of partnership work with feeder primary schools. Consequently, many more parents now attend reporting evenings and play an active role in discussions about their child's option choices. A number of joint policies with feeder primaries have been developed which has helped to improve arrangements when students transfer between schools.
 - Governors have skilfully managed the challenges caused by many changes of staffing. Staffing is now much more consistent. Newly-qualified teachers have had the opportunity to take up post early to support their induction, and have made a confident start to their teaching careers.

- Governors have considered how the pupil premium funding should be used and are aware there has been a mixed picture in terms of its impact. They recognise more needs to be done to ensure that disadvantaged students make consistently good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. In most lessons, behaviour is calm and the atmosphere is purposeful. This represents a significant transformation since the last inspection. Most students have positive attitudes to learning and respond well to the enthusiasm shown by many teachers. However, a small minority of students are still prepared to disrupt learning when lessons fail to engage their interest.
- Leaders and managers have successfully challenged the poor behaviour that was prevalent when the academy was last inspected. Central to this has been an expectation that staff and students will be polite and courteous and show respect for one another. Behaviour at social times is much improved. Students move around the academy site calmly. They behave well in the dining hall and there is little litter to be seen.
- Leaders have taken steps to reduce the culture of lateness and the vast majority of students now arrive punctually for school in the morning and to lessons during the day.
- Relationships between staff and students are good. Students implicitly trust teachers to deal with issues that concern them. Incidents of bullying are now low because the school expects students to treat each other with respect and tolerance.
- The number of students that are excluded for poor behaviour has reduced sharply. There are better systems in place to support those students that exhibit challenging behaviour. Most students respond positively to the rewards system and are eager to earn achievement points. Assemblies are used regularly to celebrate good behaviour.
- Since the last inspection attendance has improved steadily, although it remains low in comparison to the national average. The academy has strengthened its attendance team and has pursued a broad range of approaches to improve attendance. The whereabouts of absent students is checked daily and the effective work of the attendance officer is reducing the number of students that are absent persistently. Where necessary, the academy has prosecuted families that do not ensure their children attend school.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. The academy's own survey of parental views shows parents unanimously believe their children are safe at school.
- Students receive good information about risks to their safety when on-line and about sexual exploitation, but are less well informed about the risks of radicalisation and extremism. The academy is aware of this and is taking steps to ensure these themes are covered in the curriculum.
- There are good systems in place to identify and respond to students in need of protection. Students receive good quality and timely support from the well trained academy staff which includes a team of social workers. There are good links with partner agencies and the attendance officer is integral to the safeguarding team. Detailed records are maintained and the team regularly reviews its practice through analysis of case-studies.
- The single central record is meticulously maintained and all members of staff and governors receive regular training on child protection. Policies are widely understood and applied consistently.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has improved strongly since the last inspection. Inadequate teaching has been virtually eradicated and the proportion of good teaching has improved considerably. Older students that had lost interest in learning because of the poor teaching they previously received, have been re-engaged and now work productively in lessons. However, the quality of teaching, over time, has not been good enough to secure good levels of achievement.
- Most teachers use information on what students already know and can do to plan learning. This ensures there is an appropriate level of challenge that helps students to make gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. However, some teachers are less skilled in this approach and, consequently, some

students are set tasks that are too easy for some and too demanding for others.

- Teachers use a broad range of activities and approaches. As a result, most students are engaged in learning and are keen to contribute and participate. Many teachers are skilled in checking how well students have grasped new areas of learning and use this information to adjust teaching accordingly.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge and communicate their enthusiasm for the subject, which encourages students to get involved and enjoy their lessons. Lessons typically are productive and incidents of low level disruption are infrequent.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly. The academy has a consistent approach to marking that ensures students know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve further. However, opportunities to move students' learning on are missed because students do not routinely respond to teachers' comments and improve their work.
- Although students currently in the academy make sound progress in mathematics, too much teaching focuses on teaching methods, rather than developing a deeper conceptual understanding. As a result, some students struggle with the more challenging and unfamiliar mathematical problems they encounter at GCSE and beyond. The academy has recognised this and is amending schemes of work to address the issue.
- Students making slower progress, and those with particular learning needs receive good support. Most teaching assistants provide thoughtful help and guidance in lessons and work effectively with small groups of students to address gaps in their learning.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards in the academy were very low at the time of the last inspection. In 2013, standards rose sharply and the academy moved above the government's floor standard for the first time. Unvalidated results for 2014 indicate this improvement has been consolidated. However, the proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, remains below that seen nationally.
- Students enter the academy with levels of attainment that are significantly below the national average. In particular, levels of literacy and numeracy are low. Weak teaching in the past meant that many students made little progress and became disengaged from learning. More recently, better teaching and a more suitable curriculum are leading to better progress. This is most marked in Key Stage 3 where most students currently in the academy make expected, and many make good, progress. Older students have also begun to make better progress. Students that took GCSE examinations in 2014 made good progress during their last two years, but this was not enough to make up the ground they lost in their first three years at the academy.
- Predictions, based on robust assessments, for students currently in Key Stage 4 indicate standards will rise further in 2015 and 2016.
- Students make good progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, in Key Stage 3. The academy has adapted the Key Stage 3 curriculum to ensure there is a strong focus on tackling weaknesses in literacy. The 'Springsboard' curriculum, introduced to help students make a positive transition from primary school, has had a clear impact. Teachers who deliver this programme have high expectations and their insistence on good verbal and written communication is leading to good progress. Students' reading skills are developing quickly and most now take pride in their presentation of written work.
- Progress at Key Stage 4 has been better in English than in mathematics. In English, an increasing proportion of students have made expected and good progress. Improvements in mathematics have been slower, although students currently in the academy are now making expected progress in the subject. In order to strengthen progress rates in mathematics further, the academy has introduced additional numeracy lessons into Key Stage 3.
- More than half of the academy's students are from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the past, their achievement was well below that of their peers in the academy and of other students nationally. Typically, their attainment in English and mathematics was around one and a half GCSE grades below their peers. However, disadvantaged students currently in the academy now make better progress and gaps in attainment are reducing. Pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up funding are well targeted and leading to accelerated progress. For example, last year, disadvantaged students in Year 8 made better progress than other students and the attainment gap was successfully narrowed.
- The academy no longer enters students early for GCSE examinations, preferring to give students the

maximum amount of time to prepare. This is having a positive impact in raising standards in English.

- The most able students in the academy make good progress because most teaching is suitably challenging. For example, last year there were 26 students in Year 11 that entered the academy with higher levels of attainment. All of these students attained five or more GCSE A* to C grades, with several attaining A* to A grades in English and mathematics. The most able students in the current Year 11 are expected to achieve similar results.
- Students with special educational needs make similar progress to other students in the academy. There are some notable success stories, where good support for particularly vulnerable students is resulting in good academic progress. Lower-attaining students receive good support and this is helping them to make similar progress to that seen nationally.
- Last year, all students that attended alternative provision attained qualifications in English and mathematics and most also attained some vocational qualifications. All students went on to a place in education, employment or training.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- The sixth form requires improvement because the curriculum is too narrow to meet the needs of some students. Consequently, a number of students have had to find other post-16 providers to meet their needs. Currently, there is only a limited offer of academic and vocational courses and this has adversely affected recruitment to the sixth form.
- There is good information, advice and guidance to help students take the next step after the sixth form. Students are grateful for the good support they receive with the higher education applications process. All students that completed the sixth form last year left to take up places in education, employment or training. The vast majority of those that applied to university successfully secured their first choice destination.
- All students in the sixth form have the opportunity to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and many undertake the extended project. Some contribute to the paired reading programme and support younger students in the academy. Many are actively involved in performing arts productions.
- The achievement of sixth form students, over time, has been broadly similar to that of other students nationally. The sixth form meets the government's 16 to 19 interim minimum standards. Leaders and managers of the sixth form have focused on securing the quality of provision and, consequently, courses that were less successful are no longer offered.
- Sixth form students that did not achieve a grade C or better in GCSE English or mathematics receive further teaching. This is more effective in English than mathematics.
- Sixth form teaching is now timetabled more widely across the academy site. As a result, sixth formers are more visible and are good role models for other students.

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	131896
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	447691

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	794
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Marshall
Principal	Russell Heritage
Date of previous school inspection	10 October 2012
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