

Southfield School for Girls

Lewis Road, Kettering NN15 6HE

Inspection dates	3–4 February 2016
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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The governors, headteacher and senior leaders have effectively promoted a culture of learning across the school. This is encouraging teachers and pupils to reflect on what they do and, in turn, is leading to improvements in both the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- The quality of teaching overall is good, comprising what goes on in the classroom and the numerous structured intervention arrangements devised by leaders and teachers. Teachers' good subject knowledge is contributing to engaging pupils' interest in learning. Effective checking of learning and providing support for those who fail to make the expected progress is leading to better outcomes.
- Pupils are keen to learn. They readily engage when challenged to do so and help each other when in difficulty. They work well together in groups and individually. They are curious about the world around them, proud of their school and take pride in their own work.
- Outcomes for pupils are good across a range of subjects and year groups. Given their starting points, pupils are making progress in line with or above national averages in English and mathematics. Many are achieving high grades in a range of subjects.
- The sixth form is good. Standards reached, and the very good guidance from staff, result in all learners going on to higher education, employment or training. Many enter into well-respected universities having received a rounded education that prepares them for the real world.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers are not tapping into the eagerness of pupils to learn, and fail to challenge them fully. The questioning of some teachers does not check learning or help pupils to make connections with other learning. This results in some pupils not learning as much as they might.
- Some targets set for sixth formers are not reflecting the expertise pupils have developed in subjects during their main school studies. As a result, they are not always encouraged to make the progress of which they are capable.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure further improvements in outcomes by ensuring that teachers:
 - have consistently high expectations of how much learning pupils can achieve
 - share the best practice in questioning so that all teachers check what pupils have understood, deepen pupils' understanding and help them to make connections with other learning
 - design challenging activities and resources to help enthuse pupils about their learning and make even better progress, whatever their starting points and abilities.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - reviewing the target-setting arrangements in the sixth form so that learners' prior learning in subject areas is built on and better progress is secured.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has a measured, unrelenting focus on securing improvement in all aspects of the school's work. Her senior and middle leadership teams ably assist her. Together they are driving a culture of improvement that is benefiting pupils' overall development and outcomes.
- The headteacher and governors have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and areas for improvement. They have put together a school development plan that they are implementing effectively. This is resulting in improvements in pupils' outcomes.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is good. A programme of professional development for teachers is built around a review of classroom practice, work in books and the opinions of pupils. Leaders and managers include aspects of this review in targets for teachers. Teachers with similar targets are encouraged to work with each other. An experienced teacher, who acts as a coach, supports them. Middle leaders drive whole-school initiatives through calendared departmental time. An example of this is the greater consistency that is evident in books with respect to the feedback given to pupils that is securing further learning. All of this is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and better learning for pupils.
- The leadership has designed a curriculum that tries to balance the needs of pupils and the pressures of securing national progress indicators. Pupils study a range of options that allow them to meet the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) qualification. The school is successful in doing this and is on track for close to two thirds of pupils securing this qualification this academic year. The curriculum, while narrowing the option choices, is securing a good base from which pupils can progress onto their next stage of studies. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' personal development and well-being through timetabled lessons, tutorials and compulsory religious education.
- There is a wide and varied range of extra-curricular activities for which there is a high level of participation. Teachers provide opportunities for discussion in tutor time, through a focus on current affairs. All of this is making a positive contribution to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The 73 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 40 staff who returned a similar Ofsted questionnaire are extremely positive about all aspects of the school's work. Staff are unreservedly supportive of the leadership of the school with 90% of parents being so.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have expertise in personnel management, finance and pupils' performance evaluation. This allows them to provide both support and effective challenge to the school leadership.
 - They undertake training to keep up to date with respect to safeguarding issues, performance information and the curriculum requirements, such as preparing pupils for life in modern Britain and the dangers of extremism.
 - Governors scrutinise the information on teachers' performance and take effective decisions on whether or not to reward them with an increase in pay. Governors monitor the progress of the development plan and the effect of pupil premium expenditure closely to ensure that there is good impact.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has invested in training for all staff and has five adults trained at a high level to provide effective child protection support. Their systems are robust. Adults in the school take timely and supportive actions to ensure that pupils at risk remain safe. Most of the parents who responded to Parent View said that the school keeps their child safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The experience in the classroom and the numerous intervention arrangements are helping to deliver teaching that is good overall. Teachers are reflective of their practice and this is leading to an improvement in the quality of teaching.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers use their good subject knowledge and positive relationships with pupils to capture their enthusiasm for learning. They prepare engaging activities and challenges for pupils to explore. Established habits, because of high expectations, lead pupils to attempt the work without hesitation.

- Teachers or peers are on hand to support individual pupils having trouble. Feedback, both oral and written, is useful and responded to positively to further support learning. Pupils' curiosity is aroused and they make connections with other learning. Inspectors saw elements of this in a Year 9 German lesson on using money in a foreign language, in a Year 11 media studies lesson focusing on analysing approaches to television comedy, a Year 12 psychology lesson and several mathematics lessons.
- Learning is less effective when teachers have low expectations of what pupils can do, and design activities that do not challenge or engage them. Pupils' loyalty towards their teachers leads them to be compliant and to carry out the tasks in a leisurely way without progressing as far as they might. Teachers' checking of learning fails to explore whether pupils can apply their learning to unfamiliar situations to deepen understanding and support better progress.
- Leaders have made assessment a focus for teachers, resulting in practice that is more consistent across year groups and curriculum areas. Teachers convey what pupils have done well and how they can further their learning. In most cases, pupils respond to teachers' comments and progress their learning further. However, in a few cases, teachers set next steps that are not challenging. Also, sometimes pupils respond in a simple way. In both cases, further learning is not well supported. Leaders are driving their assessment policy by addressing this weakness through regular book scrutiny.
- Teaching in mathematics is a strength of the school while teaching in English is developing because of more stable staffing. Across the curriculum, teachers encourage pupils to explain key words and explore their understanding when reading passages from textbooks or printed articles. Regular reading sessions are encouraging pupils to read more widely and often.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Girls, when given the chance, demonstrate very positive attitudes towards their learning. They are heard discussing and debating topics when working in groups. Many are curious and eager to learn but some lack the confidence to ask questions and remain passive. Those who understand readily support those who are having difficulties. In Year 7 information technology lessons, pupils who understand the work have established habits of moving around the class to support anyone who is struggling.
- Pupils are courteous and polite when engaging with visitors. They offer their opinions readily. They allow others to take their turn and listen to the contributions being made.
- Pupils are proud of their school and loyal, sometimes to a fault, not engaging fully as the impression they hold of good behaviour is being quiet. They come prepared for learning and most ensure that their work is organised and presented well.
- The school uses formalised alternative provision where applicable (hospital and outreach service) for those pupils with long-term medical issues who cannot attend school for periods of time. Arrangements are in place to make sure they are safe and well looked after and have work to do, if appropriate, in order to continue their learning.
- Girls are aware of how to stay safe and relate times when, through assemblies and tutor sessions, staff tell them about the risks they may face. On Fridays, pupils have the opportunity to explore current affairs through a system of quizzes in their tutor period.
- Pupils have opportunities to take on responsibilities across the school and in different ways in classrooms. They do so willingly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Poor behaviour across the school is rare and proportions of fixed-term exclusions have consistently remained lower than the national average for several years. Pupils understand the consequences of poor behaviour and they say teachers are fair in the steps they take. Teachers have received training on identifying and dealing with mental and emotional issues to ensure that stress levels and anxiety are minimised.
- Pupils' attendance has been above the national average for several years. It is expected to be so this year as well, with numbers persistently absent also being lower than the national average. The attendance of those with special educational needs or disabilities has improved over the years and is closing the gap with the national average for all pupils.

- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has fluctuated, having risen substantially since the last inspection. However, it is currently falling. The school's monitoring systems have identified the causes of this, which relate to the personal circumstances of a few individuals. Staff are supporting these pupils and targeted intervention is securing better learning, although this has not yet resulted in better attendance.
- Movement between lessons is sensible, as is behaviour during break times. Girls are trusted to behave appropriately and many earn the right to eat and remain in their tutor rooms at break times. Punctuality is not an issue of concern in the school as warning bells during breaks help pupils get to their lessons on time.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Outcomes in a wide range of subjects have been, and continue to be, good in the school. More stable staffing has addressed the dip in English outcomes last year. Given their starting points, pupils are making progress that is in line with, or better than, the national averages in English and, more strongly, in mathematics. School assessment information shows that outcomes for pupils in all year groups, including the sixth form, are improving. This is supported strongly by work seen in books and the progress being made in the majority of lessons.
- In the last academic year, the proportion of pupils securing 5 or more A* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, was much higher than the national average. The proportion securing an EBacc qualification, with passes in mathematics, English, sciences, humanities and languages, was double the national average. Levels of progress in mathematics were strong and above the national average, although pupils' levels of progress in English were slightly below. Progress information for the current Year 11 pupils is expected to be at or above the 2015 national averages, and the number of pupils on track to achieve 5 or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics is well above the 2015 average. Information provided by the school shows that, for other year groups, this level of progress and attainment is likely to be continued.
- The gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are closing. Last year, disadvantaged pupils were a grade behind other pupils nationally in English. This year, this gap is on track to be halved. Staff predict that the gap in mathematics between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally will be just a third of a grade this year.
- Staff challenge the most-able pupils effectively, and many will secure the highest grades across a range of subjects as they did last year. These pupils are enrolled onto a pathway that offers them the opportunity to follow separate sciences and the possibility of doing two languages.
- Those pupils who have special educational needs or disability are also doing well. Regular monitoring of progress is allowing the school to address underachievement through some effective intervention arrangements.
- Literacy needs of pupils are addressed through additional intervention when needed and, generally, through a policy that drives understanding of key words and comprehension of extended writing across the curriculum.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Leadership and management of post-16 study programmes are working effectively to improve the quality of teaching, and this is leading to improved learning. Preparation for next steps is exceptional, with every learner leaving their studies going on to higher education, employment or training. A partnership arrangement with a local secondary school is enabling the school to offer a wide and varied range of courses, although those at the school are mainly academic. Leaders have put in place a plan to introduce a few more vocational courses that will meet the needs of a wider range of learners more closely in the next academic year.
- A review of teaching in the sixth form, carried out by the school, has identified the need to raise the aspirations of learners further, and the challenge posed by teachers. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and have good relationships with learners. Inspectors observed good progress in curriculum areas that last year did not perform well.
- Opportunities for learners to engage in discussion exist in lessons and tutor sessions. Teachers manage the discussion around controversial topics with sensitivity.

- All post-16 learners 'buddy up' with Year 7 pupils for a period of time and many are involved in the National Citizenship Service. Staff offer effective and impartial careers advice, helping learners to prepare for their next steps. All of this contributes to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, and leads to learners' good personal development. Learners also receive training on interview techniques. However, too few take up the opportunity offered for work experience.
- The standards reached by learners and the overall point scores they secure are often in line with or above the national average. This allows a large majority of learners go onto university to study the course of their choice. The remainder continue into employment or training. There is a high degree of retention across most courses. Teachers support those without a C grade in English and mathematics to retake the examinations. In 2015, all learners in the mathematics resit class secured a C grade and over 60% in English, and all improved on their GCSE grade. However, the progress made by learners, given their starting points, is not strong. Some learners are achieving grades lower than what might be expected, given their prior attainment in the subject. Staff set targets that, on occasions, do not challenge learners sufficiently.

School details

Unique reference number	136976
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10001817

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	950
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Cathy Pinnock
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Mrs Julie Goswell
Telephone number	01536 513063
Website	www.southfieldsch.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@southfieldsch.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 October 2013

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized girls' secondary school. It has a mixed sixth form.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is much lower than the national average.
- Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds and the vast majority speak English as their first language. A very small number of pupils are from other minority ethnic backgrounds.
- In 2015, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a wide range of subjects and year groups between Years 7 and 13. Some observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also visited a number of tutorial sessions and an assembly.
- Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation of its own performance, development plans records on checks of the quality of teaching and information on pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour. Safeguarding documents and arrangements to keep pupils safe were also reviewed.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils, subject leaders and leaders responsible for different aspects of the school's work. Phone conversations were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, chair of the learning committee and the school adviser. A meeting was held with the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors considered the views of 73 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. The views of 40 staff who returned a similar questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

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