

Springwell Alternative Academy

St Helen's Boulevard, Carlton Road, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S71 2AY

Inspection dates

8–9 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
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

- Leaders and managers effectively implement improvements in teaching and learning and personal development throughout the school. This effective action ensures that all pupils have positive opportunities for the future. Some of these improvements – for example, using pupils' progress information to plan learning – are in their early stages so it is too soon to see the impact.
- Staff manage behaviour with a high level of skill, providing essential support where and when it is needed the most.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/ or disabilities receive good support from the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). Pupils' needs are regularly reviewed, and staff provide appropriate and effective support.
- Pupils make significant improvements in their personal, social and emotional well-being. Pupils learn how to understand themselves and how to put measures in place to deal with difficult situations.
- Leaders and managers have been successful in supporting and encouraging pupils to attend. Pupils' attendance is better than it has been in the past.
- Pupils are well mannered and polite. They cheerfully welcome visitors and are happy. Pupils talk very positively about the school.
- Pupils enjoy being at the school, understand why they are there and appreciate the support that they receive.
- Parents talk about the positive effect that the school has had on their child. Often these changes also make a difference to family life.
- Time is set aside during the school day for teachers to encourage pupils to read. However, systems to improve reading are not fully developed and it is too soon to fully evaluate the impact.
- Governors support leaders well. They provide appropriate challenge to help leaders reflect on their actions to improve the school.
- Leaders and managers are developing personalised pathways for the pupils to access the curriculum. Leaders use specialist teachers to provide a varied and personalised curriculum for pupils. It is too soon to see the full impact of these changes on pupils' progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Some leaders do not use progress information to monitor pupils' academic achievements in English and mathematics as effectively as they do for pupils' personal achievements. Consequently, pupils' academic progress is not as strong as their progress in improving personal development and behaviour.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for all groups of pupils throughout the school by:
 - providing them with opportunities to develop and master English, including reading, and mathematics skills across the curriculum
 - providing a more personalised approach for learning, particularly in English and mathematics, and particularly for the most able.
- Develop leaders' skills at all levels by:
 - ensuring that leaders have a good understanding of pupils' information so that they can support teachers to use this information to plan learning that meets the needs of all pupils
 - supporting leaders to track pupils' progress from their starting points, and raising expectations for progress over time
 - enabling leaders to check the impact of professional development opportunities on improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- School leaders have a clear vision for the future and are determined to pursue this relentlessly. Staff are also committed to improving the outcomes for all pupils.
- The trust supports the school well, sharing knowledge and encouraging collaborative working with other specialised settings within the trust. This enables the school to have access to new methods of support and therapies for pupils.
- Leaders encourage staff to build resilience in their pupils by sharing the understanding that it is 'ok to make mistakes'. This allows pupils the freedom to try new ideas without adversely influencing their social and emotional well-being.
- The school works closely and effectively with a variety of outside agencies including social care and health. Systems to support those who have SEN and/or disabilities are thorough and well coordinated.
- Leaders encourage and support numerous experiences for pupils, including cultural performances, art, volunteering, community work and immersive learning. This further broadens the experiences for pupils who attend the school and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders provide high-quality professional development for staff. This supports stability, encourages teamwork and ensures that all staff are working to the same structures and systems. However, leaders do not use information gathered from staff to steer the type of training that is needed.
- Facilities at the main site of the school are of a very high standard. However, this is not always the case in the dispersed pupil referral unit settings where facilities can be limited. Where staff transport pupils to access further facilities across the authority, valuable learning time is lost.
- The support leaders provide to non-specialist teachers does not include how to ensure that pupils are stretched and challenged in their learning. Teachers do not routinely ensure that pupils are appropriately challenged and therefore individual pupils' progress is sometimes limited.
- Leaders generally use funding for pupils who are disadvantaged effectively. However, leaders' checks on the impact of some of the areas of the spending are not currently effective so the impact is not clear.
- The sports premium is used effectively. Staff receive training to extend the curriculum in a positive, engaging and enjoyable way. Pupils have opportunities to play competitively and have access to high-quality resources enabling them to further develop their social, emotional and physical skills.
- There is a wide variety of choice in the curriculum, giving pupils opportunities to experience different subjects. The choice of subjects available depends on the skills of the staff and therefore can change when there are staff changes. Currently, there is little science offered at key stage 3 and key stage 4.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed to the school and are keen to encourage all pupils to be the best that they can.
- Governors have a wide range of experience and are knowledgeable about the school. They visit regularly and have a clear understanding about the additional needs pupils have.
- Leaders of the school provide governors with limited information about the progress of pupils. This does not allow governors to question leaders with enough rigour.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding is given priority and structures and systems are fully in place. Staff are aware of the importance of safeguarding and regular training takes place to provide updates on the current statutory requirements, including the 'Prevent' duty. This training ensures that staff are aware of the risks of extremism and radicalisation so that appropriate measures can be taken to keep pupils safe and secure.
- Support for families is an important part of the work that takes place at the school. Families feel that by working together they can make more of an impact on their child's safety and well-being.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The overall quality of teaching is good. Where some areas are weaker, leaders recognise this and address it swiftly.
- Specialist staff are in place for some subject areas. This allows a greater breadth of experiences for pupils and enables them to access a wider variety of courses and qualifications.
- Teachers use high-quality questioning to check pupils' understanding during lessons and to encourage pupils to extend their learning. This is particularly the case in key stage 1 and key stage 2 where it has greater impact and encourages pupils to think carefully.
- Pupils are willing to try new things, particularly in key stages 3 and 4 and when they have support in place. Staff support and encourage pupils to learn from mistakes, building resilience and self-confidence. 'This school is the best and it's what every kid needs', was the view of one pupil. This view was strongly supported by others.
- Staff have positive and mutually respectful relationships with pupils. Through this, pupils are encouraged to work with their teachers to achieve the best possible outcomes.
- The school provides high-quality resources to allow those pupils with additional and more complex needs to access all areas of the curriculum such as the quiet room, personal learning spaces and sensory devices.

- Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 work hard to gain appropriate qualifications to progress to the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Teachers carry out research projects, for example finding calming music for pupils to work to, as part of their professional development. The results of some of these projects are put into practice and where this happens a positive impact can be seen on pupils' progress and behaviour.
- Pupils are quick to learn and behave well when lessons are practical and interactive. This is clear to see in the primary stages of the school.
- Good-quality support is available but on occasion staff do not encourage pupils enough to become independent learners. This sometimes leads to an over-reliance on staff.
- Teachers do not always use assessment data effectively to accurately plan and teach personalised lessons. On occasion, some pupils wait for others to catch up or are given further work at the same level to complete. This limits the progress pupils make, particularly the most able pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding
- Staff use positive interventions to avoid disruption of learning. Pupils learn to accept this help quickly and others ignore possible distractions.
- The school's analysis of pupils' needs is thorough and leaders implement accurate strategies to support the personal development of pupils. A wide variety of therapies and interventions are used to moderate behaviour and support social and emotional development.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are secure and strong. A culture of mutual respect exists. Pupils fully appreciate the support they receive.
- Pupils participate well in school life. They recognise the change in themselves that is brought about by the teacher's knowledge and understanding of their individual needs. Pupils' views of their personal development are positive.
- Staff plan social and structured playtimes well. Staff participate fully with pupils throughout the full school day, modelling excellent behaviour and interactions with others.
- Pupils feel safe and staff teach them how to keep themselves safe in the community and online. Staff accurately identify areas of concern and measures are put in place to provide extra information and support.
- The provision for the health and safety of pupils and staff is good. Protective clothing and equipment are available for all activities that require them and are kept in good repair.
- Pupils have a positive attitude to learning and wish to succeed. They understand that small measures of success in their personal development and self-moderation receive appropriate celebration and praise.

- Pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and how to keep themselves fit and well. They make positive choices and can explain their choices.
- The alternative provision provides pupils with additional support when choosing a career. The alternative provision enables pupils to experience practical tasks in a safe and controlled environment.
- Leaders provide good-quality careers advice. Advice is available for key stage 3 pupils and is supported by the personal, social, health and economic curriculum.
- Pupils are polite and respectful to staff, each other and visitors. They wear their uniforms with pride and are proud of their school.
- A number of pupils take the opportunity to volunteer in the community, as part of working towards their Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Staff are highly skilled in managing very challenging behaviour, knowing when to intervene and when to use a variety of de-escalation techniques.
- Pupils respect each other and show understanding of the difficulties that they have each faced in their previous schools.
- Low-level disruption happens rarely and when it does occur it is dealt with quickly and expertly by staff. Little learning time is lost and pupils learn to ignore the inappropriate behaviour of others.
- Instances of bullying behaviour occasionally occur and, when they do, staff deal with them quickly and expertly. Pupils do not feel that there are any issues surrounding bullying at the school. 'No one's a bully. We wouldn't like it. Some people can be mean when they are new but after a while they learn the right thing to do.'
- Staff use restorative practice well and all pupils understand that their actions will always have a consequence. Data relating to significant incidents in behaviour show a year-on-year improvement. Similarly, the number of fixed-term exclusions is also reducing.
- Leaders and staff work tirelessly to improve the attendance of pupils. Thorough systems are in place and work with parents and pupils takes place regularly. All pupils at the school have significantly improved their attendance in comparison with their previous educational setting.
- Pupils attend the alternative provision regularly and their enjoyment of the practical aspects enables them to display appropriate behaviour. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning at the alternative provision.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes for pupils are improving and pupils are making better progress. Key stage 4 pupils achieve a variety of qualifications which enable them to move on to their next place of education, employment or training (EET).

- All groups of pupils make expected progress with no groups making less than expected progress overall.
- Attainment is very low for most pupils on entry. Many years of disillusionment, frequent managed moves between schools, difficult home lives and a lack of support have led to significant periods of time out of education. It is not uncommon for pupils to be up to five years behind their peers academically. Despite this, there are positive signs of improvement and pupils are beginning to attain better because of the actions of the school.
- Targeted support from a specialist member of staff has helped ensure that transitions and preparation for EET are strong. This support continues after pupils leave and ensures that they are in the right place and continue to receive support as they progress into Year 12.
- Staff fully support pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils have many strategies to enable them to cope with their difficulties because leaders ensure that this is a priority.
- Academic outcomes for pupils are not as strong as the outcomes from their personal development. This is because leaders do not place as much emphasis on the academic aspects of pupils' education.
- Regular, well-supported lessons in English and mathematics enable pupils to develop their confidence. However, the wider curriculum lacks opportunities for pupils to practise these skills regularly.
- Activities such as 'drop everything and read' are helping to change pupil's attitudes to reading. However, reading is not yet embedded throughout the school and the reading curriculum requires further development to measure the impact of new initiatives.

School details

Unique reference number	141564
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	10036406

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	The Wellspring Trust
Chair	Ben Finley
Executive principal	David Whitaker
Telephone number	01226 291 133
Website	www.springwelllearningcommunity.co.uk
Email address	springwell@springwellacademies.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Springwell Alternative Academy is a dispersed pupil referral unit for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs, including associated difficulties and learning difficulties.
- The school is part of the Wellspring Trust.
- The school can support up to 120 pupils, aged between 5 and 16.
- The school operates over eight sites and uses a small number of alternative providers on a part-time basis.

- Many pupils arrive at the school in key stage 4 and the aim is to prepare them fully for gaining qualifications and transition to their next stage of EET.
- The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is well above the national average.
- The school uses three alternative providers – Elite Training, Dearne Valley Personal Development Centre and ITC.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning, some with school leaders.
- Inspectors visited four pupil referral unit sites and one alternative provider – Elite training.
- Inspectors examined a large selection of pupils' work and saw many different activities that were taking place.
- Inspectors scrutinised the arrangements for safeguarding including checking records and other data ensuring that the school is keeping the pupils safe.
- Meetings were held with the executive principal, the principal, vice principals, middle leaders, the SENCo, teachers, support staff, parents and pupils. Meetings were also held with the chair of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and a representative from the school trust.
- Inspectors considered the views of 49 members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey.
- Too few parents responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. However, inspectors took account of the responses in the school's own survey and the comments made by parents whom they spoke with.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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