

Sirius Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135945
Local Authority	N/A
Inspection number	381973
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Jan Bennett HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1278
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Porteus
Principal	Cathy Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	296 Anlaby Park Road South Hull HU4 7JB
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 32 lessons, taught by 31 different teachers, and visited additional sixth-form lessons. They also evaluated the quality of the support given to students with hearing impairment. Inspectors met with students, staff and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation form, development plan and analysis of student achievement data. Inspectors also looked at the 59 completed questionnaires received from parents and carers plus questionnaire responses from staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether attainment is rising quickly enough across the academy and if students' progress has improved sufficiently to be considered good.
- Whether initiatives and strategies to improve attendance have been successful especially in reducing the number of persistent absentees.
- If the quality of teaching and learning is good enough to improve outcomes for students and if assessment is used well enough to enable students to improve the quality of their work and make better progress.
- If the leadership at all levels is strong enough and whether it has the capacity to drive further improvement.

Information about the school

The academy opened in September 2009 on the site of Pickering High Sports College and students from the predecessor school were directly transferred. The academy's major sponsor is Hull College and the local authority is an associate sponsor. Since its opening, the academy has experienced considerable changes to staffing; 34 new staff have been appointed and many existing staff have changed roles and responsibilities. In September 2011 the academy moved to a new building shared with Ganton Special School and the local authority's Education Service for Hearing and Vision (ESHV). Students from the ESHV are fully integrated into the academy.

The academy is above average size. It has fewer than average students from minority ethnic backgrounds and with a first language other than English but the numbers are increasing. A high proportion of students is known to be eligible for free school meals; more than twice the national average. The proportions of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and with a statement of special educational needs, are above average. The academy has joint specialisms in sport and environmental science. The academy has a number of awards: Healthy School Status; the Information, Care and Guidance Award (gold); Careers Mark; and Inclusion Mark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The academy is developing at a fast pace and offers a good and improving education for its students. The Principal provides extremely strong and effective leadership and she is supported very well by the governing body. Together, they took very tough decisions in order to strengthen leadership and build a team of very capable and talented teachers. The academy is now oversubscribed which is testament to its growing reputation within the local community.

GCSE results are improving year on year and students are making increasingly better progress. The proportion of Year 11 students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C has risen by 30 percentage points in the last two years. The proportion achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has also improved considerably but is below average. Improving literacy and numeracy skills remains a major priority for the academy.

The quality of teaching and learning is improving quickly. A large majority of the teaching observed was good with pockets of outstanding practice. Students are cared for very well. The academy is very inclusive and students treat each other with respect. They are very polite and welcoming and are justifiably proud of the academy. Students' attitudes to learning have been turned around. A member of staff who also worked at the predecessor school said, 'I am amazed by the transformation that the academy has achieved for these pupils'.

Students' behaviour, both in and out of class, is good. They arrive at lessons on time and settle to work very quickly. Celebration assemblies and the coveted status of 'expert learner' are helping to change attitudes. Attendance is average overall but better in Key Stage 3. Initiatives to build stronger links with parents and carers have been introduced, including the recent appointment of an education welfare officer, but it is too early to see their full impact. The number of persistent absentees is declining but too many disengaged students in Years 10 and 11 continue to miss out on their education.

The specialist subjects are leading developments in the sixth form. The rugby academy, run in partnership with Hull FC Rugby League Club, is helping improve attitudes to learning. Sport and science also play a key part in the very effective transition work with feeder primary schools.

Leaders and governors are driving improvements at a rapid pace and leadership is

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becoming increasingly dispersed. The move to the new building was managed very well and caused minimum disruption to learning. Partnerships are extremely strong and make an outstanding contribution to the work of the academy. Self-evaluation is accurate and development planning is very thorough. There is a growing momentum of improvement and morale is increasingly high. Outcomes for students and many other aspects of provision have improved quickly, showing the academy has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics.
- Build stronger links with parents and carers in order to:
 - gain their support to improve students' attendance and reduce persistent absence
 - help them to support their child's learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Attainment is improving strongly. The proportion of Year 11 students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C was above average for the first time this summer. The proportion achieving GCSE passes in English and mathematics at grades A* to C is still below average but the gap is closing and the academy's internal tracking data suggest there will be greater improvement next year. Science results were lower than other subjects last year but improved considerably this summer. The standard of students' work is average overall but is higher in Key Stage 3, where the academy is not compensating for a legacy of under-performance. Students' progress is improving quickly as a result of better teaching and learning. Progress was good in most of the lessons observed. Students have a good attitude to learning. They are keen to contribute to group and class discussions and are proud of their work. They apply themselves well throughout the lesson and enjoy learning. They are set challenging targets that are monitored closely and they know what they need to do to improve. Students from groups with a history of weaker performance, such as those eligible for free school meals, are making much better progress and closing the gap on the rest. Students from the Education Service for Hearing and Vision (ESHV) make good progress in mathematics and science but only satisfactory progress in literacy. However, they have not been at the academy for very long and many joined with a very low reading age.

Students feel very safe and say there is very little bullying. They know about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse, internet safety, sexual health and what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Participation in sporting activities is growing. Behaviour was good or better in the large majority of the lessons observed and students move around the building in a very orderly manner. Students make a good contribution to the academy and they also contribute well to the wider community through fundraising and support for the neighbouring special school. Students develop their social skills very well in preparation for life beyond the academy and although not

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everyone manages to get a good grade in GCSE English and mathematics, many achieve alternative literacy and numeracy qualifications. The number of students leaving the academy and not going into education, employment or training is low. The academy is inspiring students to become curious, thoughtful and responsible members of the community who respect and value those from different cultures and backgrounds.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has improved rapidly and the academy has addressed priorities for improvement, identified during last year’s monitoring inspection, very effectively. Students’ attitudes to learning are much more positive, in part due to the new building and resources, but mainly in response to improvements in teaching. There are very good relationships in lessons that foster effective learning. Lessons are planned well and include a very good range of activities and resources. Tasks and questions are tailored carefully to meet the needs of students of different abilities. Teachers make regular checks on learning and, in all but a few of the weaker lessons, they adjust the pace and content of the lesson accordingly. The quality of marking is generally good with examples of outstanding practice; none is less than satisfactory. The lesson observation system is robust and leaders make very effective checks on all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. The issue of observers focusing on teaching rather than learning, identified in the monitoring inspection, has been addressed.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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The curriculum in both Key Stages 3 and 4 meets the needs of students very well. Pathways are very flexible and cater for the full range of ability. The nurture groups in Years 7 and 8 are extremely effective and support the rapid development of students’ personal and learning skills. Many students joined the academy with low reading ages and there is a very effective drive to improve reading and other literacy skills. Literacy development across the curriculum is good; numeracy is less well developed but is satisfactory. The most-able students can take examinations early and have the opportunity to study all three sciences separately. A good range of vocational courses is available in partnership with the college. Effective arrangements are in place to enable hearing impaired students to have access to the mainstream curriculum. There is an extensive enrichment programme and student participation is high.

Very effective care, guidance and support are enabling very vulnerable students to concentrate on their learning and to make good progress. The academy works very well with a wide range of external agencies in order to provide specialist support where necessary. Arrangements to ease the transition from primary school to the academy are extremely effective. Similarly, students transferring mid-year are helped to settle in very well. Students needing extra support are identified and helped very quickly. Initiatives to engage the most disaffected students and their families are slowly helping to reduce the number of persistent absentees. Students receive good advice about future options and careers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Outcomes for students are improving strongly as a result of a relentless drive to do better. Leaders and governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the academy very well. Governors have good strategic vision and are active in building the capacity of the academy. They gave the Principal invaluable support when leadership was under capacity. Senior and middle leadership is now strong and improving. Development plans are very clear and are reviewed regularly, underpinning the continuous and widespread improvement. Leaders have introduced a number of initiatives to strengthen links with parents and carers but do not yet have a parents’ and carers’ forum.

The academy has extremely strong and productive partnerships across the city that are making a very effective contribution to the curriculum and raising students’

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aspirations. Students have benefited from initiatives such as running ‘the Deep’ for a day under the Children’s Commissioner initiative and working with Hull Truck Theatre Company. The academy has effective strategies to challenge discrimination and there are very few incidents of harassment or intimidation. Gaps in performance between particular groups of students are closing. Safeguarding arrangements are good. The site is very safe and child protection procedures are very secure. The academy is a very inclusive and harmonious community and works well to improve community cohesion through its international work and initiatives in the locality. The academy manages its finances and resources very efficiently leading to good outcomes for students. Value for money is good.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The sixth form opened in September 2010 and is in the early stages of development. It is small but growing. In the first year, retention rates on courses were good and all students completing Year 12 continued in education or found employment. Teaching is good with a strong emphasis on developing the skills of individual research, analysis and evaluation. Students make good progress in lessons and receive valuable individual support. They are set challenging targets that are closely monitored. Students say they are very well supported and subject help is readily available. Sixth formers have their own base at the academy with good social and study facilities. Their contribution to the life of the academy is developing well. Both the management and quality assurance of the joint provision are very tight with very good communication between the academy and college. The college gave invaluable support to the academy in the first year, in order to get the sixth form established, and the two institutions continue to work very well together. There is a phased reduction in the level of support as the academy’s expertise grows and ambitious

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plans for further development that include continued cooperation between the institutions.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Inspectors received questionnaire responses from just below 5% of parents and carers and although they were very positive this is a low response rate. The vast majority say that their child enjoys school and feel that the academy keeps their child safe which reflects the effective safeguarding procedures. More than usual think that the school helps their child to have a healthy lifestyle but this view is not supported by the students themselves. Fewer parents and carers than average think they are kept well informed about their child’s progress, given help to support their child’s learning or have sufficient account taken of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors agreed that the academy needs to work at building more effective links with parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sirius Academy to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1278 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	47	28	47	2	3	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	25	42	32	54	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child’s progress	24	41	27	46	8	14	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	39	31	53	5	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	42	29	49	5	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	18	31	28	47	10	17	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	32	36	61	3	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	24	41	26	44	3	5	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	18	31	36	61	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	36	26	44	8	14	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	24	30	51	9	15	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	21	36	31	53	6	10	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	28	47	26	44	2	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Sirius Academy, Hull, HU4 7JB

Thank you for your warm welcome to Sirius Academy. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you at work and hearing your views. We are pleased to tell you that the academy provides a good and improving education.

Here is a summary of our findings which we hope will be of interest to you.

- Year 11 examination results are improving rapidly and you are making good progress.
- Behaviour is good in and out of lessons.
- Teaching and learning are good and improving well. We were very impressed by your very good attitude to learning.
- The curriculum is good and is tailored well to meet your needs.
- The care, guidance and support that you receive are good.
- Attendance is improving and, although it is average overall, too many of you, especially in Years 10 and 11, have high absence rates
- Provision in the sixth form is still new but it is good and although numbers are small it is developing well.

In order to improve further we have asked the academy to:

- raise attainment in English and mathematics
- build stronger links with your parents and carers in order to:
 - gain their support to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence
 - help them to support your learning.

The Principal knows exactly what to do to make the academy better and is working very hard along with the rest of the staff to improve every aspect of provision. We hope that you give them your full support and attend lessons regularly. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jan Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector

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