

St George's Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136044
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	382011
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2012
Lead inspector	John Mitcheson 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	2246
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	374
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Arnold
Headteacher	Paul Watson (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	Westgate Sleaford NG34 7PS
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Mitcheson	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Turner	Additional Inspector
Mary Lanovy Taylor	Additional Inspector
Ann Taylor	Additional Inspector
Bob Roberts	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 41 lessons on two of the academy's sites. An inspector accompanied by a senior leader visited a further four part-lessons as part of a learning walk on the third site. In all, 45 teachers were seen. Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, five groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Board. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including 290 questionnaires from parents and carers, 65 from staff and 150 from students.

Information about the school

St George's Academy opened in January 2010 following the joining together of St George's College of Technology, the Aveland High School and Cotelands High School. Prior to this, both high schools were National Challenge schools. There are two single-gender grammar schools nearby which attract a significant proportion of more-able students each year. The academy operates on three sites, one four miles and the other nine miles from Sleaford. One site will be closed in July 2012. On the two remaining sites, major rebuilding projects are close to completion. The academy is much larger than average, with a large sixth form run jointly with a local grammar school. The majority of students are White British. The proportions known to be eligible for free school meals and from minority ethnic backgrounds are below national averages. The percentage of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, mostly specific learning or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, is above average. Pupil mobility is lower than average. The academy specialises in mathematics and computing. In its first Ofsted monitoring inspection in June 2011 it was judged to be making good progress towards raising standards. The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- St George's Academy provides students with a good education. Since opening, it has raised significantly the achievement of students and ensured that the large majority acquire the skills and qualifications needed for the next stage of their education, training or the workplace. It is not outstanding because improvements are uneven across key stages and sites. A higher proportion of students show improved progress on the main site mainly because there is more leadership capacity to drive improvements.
- The sixth form is satisfactory. The notable improvements in Key Stage 4 have not been matched here. A new head of sixth form has been appointed to raise achievement and increase students' involvement.
- Good teaching, a broad, enriched curriculum and a well-coordinated range of interventions have ensured that the achievement of most students is good. Over 60% of those in Year 11 have already attained at least a C grade in English and in mathematics. Following Key Stage 4 examinations later this year, overall standards are expected to rise further to above national averages. Given students' low starting points, this represents good progress. Not all more-able students are sufficiently challenged in lessons.
- Most students attend regularly and behave exceptionally well. They are keen to learn and work diligently in most lessons. A minority become passive learners when lesson planning is not matched precisely to their needs or when inconsistencies in teaching fail to stimulate their interest.
- Outstanding leadership by the Principal has blended together students from three predecessor schools and improved provision for them to enable them to succeed. Accurate and effective self-evaluation has rightly identified the weaknesses in the sixth form and the reasons for the variations between sites. Good governance provides a clear strategic direction for the academy.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that students' achievement improves at similar rates in all key stages and on both academy sites by:
 - embedding the new arrangements for the leadership and management of the sixth form promptly so that they lead to significant improvements in 2013
 - using the new sixth form centre buildings to generate a stronger identity and ethos for the sixth form
 - improving the guidance and support provided for sixth form students so that they pursue appropriate courses and feel well supported in their learning
 - adding further senior leadership and management capacity in the academy's smaller site.

- Gain greater consistency to the quality of teaching so that a higher proportion is good or outstanding by:
 - checking that lesson planning is matched precisely to the needs of students of all abilities and interests
 - providing sufficiently challenging work to extend the learning and progress of the most-able students.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment on entry is lower than found nationally. It is notably lower on the two smaller sites compared to the main site on which the majority of students are based. A minority of students joined with significant shortfalls in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Coordinated support to improve basic skills in reading and numeracy is tackling these shortfalls and ensuring that most students meet national expectations by the end of Year 9. The overwhelming majority of questionnaires reflected parental views that their child was well taught and making good progress. Evidence gained by inspectors confirmed this view and judged students' achievement as good. Concerted efforts to raise achievement have led to year-on-year improvements since the academy opened. Most students attained at least five A* to C grades last year, and over half of them attained five A* to C grades including English and mathematics.

Although improvements have brought students' attainment closer to the national average, or in the case of mathematics higher, the rate of improvement has varied between subjects and sites. For example, students made better progress in mathematics than in English over the past two years. This gap has narrowed significantly this year due to a focus on improving progress in English. The percentages of students attaining two A* to C grades in science is much lower on both of the smaller sites, partly because students' prior attainment is lower but also

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because monitoring and interventions to accelerate students' progress have not led to similar improvements in results.

Improved monitoring of individual students' progress is enabling senior leaders to coordinate actions to provide extra support for students who need it. For example, the attainment gap between all students and those known to be eligible for free school meals is closing rapidly due to targeted support for them. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs receive good support, enabling over three quarters of them to attain at least five A* to C grades in 2011. The gap between the attainment of the academy's most-able students and the attainment of similar students nationally is also closing but remains a key priority for improvement. The vast majority of students attain well in both of the academy's specialist subjects.

Attainment on entry to the sixth form is low. Most students pursue Advanced level awards in a range of subjects, some taught collaboratively at a partner school. Not all students have been suitably prepared for the rigours of these courses. A lack of clear guidance on entry and insufficient monitoring of their academic and personal well-being led to a high proportion of them discontinuing their studies in Year 13 last year. This year, improved transitional arrangements have strengthened the care and support for students and retained a higher proportion of them in learning. Generally good and some outstanding teaching has enabled most students to make satisfactory progress and attain broadly average standards.

Quality of teaching

Observations of lessons by inspectors, some carried out jointly with senior leaders, confirmed the academy's view that the quality of teaching is good. Teaching was good or outstanding in well over half of lessons seen and was having a direct impact on raising students' achievement. Most teachers knew their subject and their students well. They had high expectations of students and managed their behaviour effectively. A focus on developing students' life-skills adds significantly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

Where teaching was good, lessons were well planned, enabling students of similar abilities to learn together in groups or in practical activities for sustained periods of time. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson, small groups worked together to investigate the electrolysis of brine. The teacher facilitated learning by supporting individual groups without distracting other students or slowing the pace of learning. Challenging questions were posed to test their understanding and sum up their findings. Students with specific special educational needs received effective one-to-one support that enabled them to engage fully in practical activities.

Where the quality of teaching was no better than satisfactory, teachers talked for too long or failed to provide suitable activities to capture students' interest. This slowed the rate of progress made and at times led to some quietly disengaging from learning. A minority of teaching did not include tasks matched to the abilities of more-able students, so they were not sufficiently challenged to work hard or think

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for themselves.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Discussions with students confirmed the views of senior leaders and most parents and carers that the academy is a safe place to be. Movement around the three academy sites is calm and sensible, and students show respect for one another. They wear their uniforms with pride and some assume responsibility as captains, prefects and councillors. Students on the two smaller sites said that they knew everyone, which helped them to make friends easily. Inspectors judged behaviour to be good rather than outstanding because a small minority of parental questionnaires raised concerns about some misbehaviour and incidents of physical bullying on one of the smaller sites which were not dealt with effectively. Inspectors raised this issue with students, who said they feel safe, mostly free from bullying and enjoy the academy, but confirmed that some incidents had occurred. Additional support provided by the 'Leicester Street' support base is helping to reduce significantly the proportion of students temporarily excluded from the academy.

Leadership and management

The considerable challenges presented by the amalgamation of three schools, the closure of one school this year, and the disruption caused by two large building projects have not deflected the Principal from driving improvements across the academy to raise standards. His leadership has steered the academy into a position of strength; standards are rising inexorably, state-of-the-art facilities are due for opening later this year and it is oversubscribed.

Middle leaders are held accountable for the standards achieved in their subjects. Lessons are routinely monitored by a range of senior and middle leaders. This generates a wealth of information, but it is not always used systematically to promote best practice. A broad, balanced curriculum across all key stages meets the needs of the vast majority of students. Accurate self-evaluation informs detailed development planning. Senior leaders are tackling the lower achievement of certain groups of students and promoting greater equality of opportunity. Senior leaders acknowledge that more work needs to be done to reduce the unevenness of achievement throughout the academy.

The closure of one of the academy sites has been handled sensitively. Staff morale has remained high and students feel they have received the care and support to help them to achieve well in examinations this year. Senior leadership and management capacity varies across the remaining two sites. To address this, the Principal and governors have committed an equivalent proportion of time to both sites next term and a newly appointed vice-principal will lead the sixth form. Support and challenge for the Principal are provided through weekly meetings with the Chair of the Governing Board. All statutory requirements are met and robust procedures to safeguard students, including the single central record, are securely in place.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



4 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of St George's Academy, Sleaford, NG34 7PS

Earlier this week we visited your academy to meet with you, join you in lessons and talk with your teachers. Thank you for making us feel welcome, especially those of you that agreed to meet with us to share your views, and those who completed questionnaires. You all represented your academy very well and made quite an impression on the inspectors, so well done.

We found that St George's Academy provides you with a good education. Many more students now attain at least five GCSE or equivalent qualifications. This bodes well for you as you approach your GCSE examinations later this year, so keep up the hard work. Behaviour is good and attendance is far more regular. We found a couple of things that need some further work, so we have asked your senior teachers to make the following improvements:

- make sure that the new leader of the sixth form makes full use of the new buildings to raise the profile of students and the standards they achieve, and make sure that they feel well supported and cared for
- make sure that students achieve equally well on both sites of the academy
- check that lessons always meet your different needs, abilities and interests and provide you with really challenging work.

Mr Watson and his staff are doing a good job. You can help them by letting them know your views on what other improvements you would like to see.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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