

The South Leeds Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135969
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	381992
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2012
Lead 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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,117
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	119
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Cieslik
Principal	Colette Jones
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jan Bennett	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Henderson	Additional Inspector
Lynne Selkirk	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector
James McGrath	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 40 lessons all taught by different teachers. Inspectors also visited the inclusion unit and vocational provision off-site. Meetings were held with four groups of students; members of the governing body; representatives of the sponsor; and academy staff, including leaders and managers. Inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at a number of documents, including the academy's self-evaluation, the safeguarding and inclusion policies, student tracking and assessment information and minutes of governing body meetings. They analysed 40 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

The academy opened in September 2009, replacing South Leeds High School. The current Principal took up post in January 2012. The academy is sponsored by the School Partnership Trust and has a shared sixth form with Garforth Academy, which is also part of the trust. The South Leeds Academy has specialisms in applied learning and English.

The academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school and has a higher than average proportion of students from minority ethnic groups, including an increasing number of students from Gypsy /Romany Traveller families. The number of students for whom English is an additional language continues to grow. The proportion of students supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high as is the proportion supported at school action. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average.

The academy did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. At the monitoring visit of 5 May 2011, the academy had made satisfactory progress towards raising standards and the priorities for further improvement were:

- raising achievement
- increasing the rate at which attendance was improving.

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	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' attainment and progress.
- The overall effectiveness of the academy is not satisfactory because although attainment in national examinations has improved since the academy opened it remains significantly below average and students do not make sufficient progress. Inspection evidence shows that progress is beginning to accelerate but is still too variable.
- Teaching is improving and is satisfactory. There are pockets of good practice but not enough to compensate fully for the gaps in students' learning caused by weak teaching in the past. The quality of marking is too variable and in the weaker lessons students are not always clear about what they should be learning and how well they are doing. Leadership of teaching is satisfactory.
- Attendance is improving well and approaching average levels. The number of persistent absentees is reducing but is still too high. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are satisfactory.
- The new Principal has acted quickly by introducing the correct strategies and systems to put the academy on the road to rapid improvement. This is evident in the improved teaching, better behaviour and increasing attendance. However, there has not been time to see the full impact. Data that leaders and managers need in order to evaluate the academy's performance are not as reliable and readily available as they need to be.
- The sixth form is satisfactory. Students perform well on vocational programmes but are not yet reaching their full potential at AS level. Students are supported well and

teaching in the sixth form is better than in the main school but it is taking time for students to adapt to the different demands of academic AS courses. The partnership with Garforth Academy is very effective and offers students a wide choice of options after the age of 16. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement by:
 - increasing the proportion of good and better teaching and learning to at least two thirds before the next full inspection
 - improving the quality and consistency of feedback given to students, both in class and on their work
 - improving the quality of data and their use by teachers to plan lessons, and for leaders and managers to monitor improvements
 - improving attendance and reducing the number of persistent absentees so that both are in line with national averages by the end of 2013.

Main Report

Achievement of students

Students make insufficient progress over time, taking their low starting points into account. Many students enter the academy with skills in reading, writing and numeracy that are well below those expected at their age. An accelerated reading programme has been introduced to give them the necessary skills to gain access to the rest of the curriculum and there are signs it is proving successful. Much better tracking of progress and more closely tailored intervention programmes aimed at Year 11 students working at the GCSE grade C/D borderline have had a very positive impact on results gained by students entered early for examinations. These interventions and strategies are being rolled out to other year groups. There are signs that achievement across the academy overall is getting better, but the evidence is more tenuous. A large majority of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire believe that their children are making good progress but the analysis of statistics and evidence from classroom observations show that their progress is slower than similar students nationally.

Almost all groups of students have under-performed in the past but White British boys performed the least well compared with others. Early entry results and internal tracking data, however, show that the attainment gap is closing both in Year 11 and lower down the academy. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are achieving in line with similar students nationally. The attainment of students for whom English is not their first language is broadly average and higher than that of others in the academy; their progress is significantly better than similar students nationally. The attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals is improving and the group is closing the gap on other students within the academy and similar students nationally.

Evidence from students' books and the lessons observed shows that students are making satisfactory progress in most lessons. Progress in the better lessons is good. Students are alert and responsive, show enthusiasm and interest and are fully involved in activities. In the least successful lessons, however, students need regular reminders to stay focused on the

task, the pace of learning slackens or students are not learning very much despite being kept busy.

Quality of teaching

Most lessons are planned well with a variety of activities and tasks to engage students and maintain their interest. Teachers use a good range of resources to enliven learning including attractive handouts, photographs, video clips and games. In some of the weaker lessons, however, the resources attract students' attention but the teacher does not capitalise on the interest that has been generated in order to boost learning. For example, video clips from the same television talent show were used in two different lessons. In one, careful preparatory work included a recap of key words and suggestions of what to look for in the video, ensuring that students' attention was focused and learning was enhanced. In the second lesson, the teacher did not exploit students' interest in the video clip. Both teaching and support for students with disabilities and special educational needs and for those whose first language is not English are effective, both in and out of lessons, and improving well. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire think that teaching is good but inspectors found that despite improvements, teaching overall is satisfactory and is not yet leading to sufficiently good learning.

In the better lessons, teachers' highly skilled questions check on learning, challenge thinking, keep students focused and unpick misconceptions. In weaker lessons, questions are not targeted carefully enough, incorrect answers are not always challenged and opportunities to develop learning are missed. Teachers allow time for reflection at the end of lessons to consolidate learning. The time is used very well in the best lessons but is not always productive in others and can interrupt the flow of learning. Assessment is used well in the better lessons to advance learning. For example, in a well-prepared information and communication technology lesson, on-line exemplar material enabled students to evaluate their assignments against examination criteria and make improvements to their work. The quality of marking is inconsistent. The best practice was seen in English and history where teachers gave clear advice to students on how to improve their work. In the better lessons, teachers enhance students' spiritual, moral and cultural development but opportunities are missed in the weaker lessons. All teachers encourage students to work together effectively in teams.

The monitoring of teaching is increasingly rigorous but observers do not always pay sufficient attention to the quality of learning. The developmental needs of teachers are identified and addressed increasingly well and the academy is using its own expertise and 'in house' training programmes to raise the standard of teaching.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The vast majority of students move in an orderly fashion around the academy and there are few instances of boisterous behaviour. Students are well mannered and polite. Movement between lessons can be a little slow, with too many students ambling along unchallenged by teachers. Behaviour remains a concern of the parents and carers responding to the questionnaire. Students say that behaviour is much improved and inspectors agree. Behaviour in lessons often reflects the quality of teaching but is satisfactory overall. Staff have worked hard and successfully to create a caring and harmonious environment in which students from different backgrounds and cultures mix well together. The number of racist incidents has reduced markedly this year and the recently introduced 'zero tolerance'

approach to bullying is having a significant impact. Students have a good awareness of the different forms that bullying can take and most students say that they feel safe in the academy. The numbers of permanent and fixed-term exclusions have been extremely high in the past but current data show that the numbers are reducing and there have been no permanent exclusions this year. Overall attendance has improved by three percentage points on the same time last year, and although it is still below the national average it is improving rapidly. The school has accelerated the extent to which it is reducing persistent absence; however, this remains high, especially in Year 10.

Leadership and management

The new Principal has high aspirations for the academy that are shared by staff. Responses to the staff questionnaire show that an overwhelming majority know what the academy is trying to achieve and are proud to be part of it. The Principal's clear direction is focussed on the development of the academy and a strong sense of purpose is emerging. Expectations of staff and students are being raised. Lines of accountability are much clearer and the drive for improvement is gathering momentum. Poor performance is tackled appropriately. Many strategies and systems recently put in place are already having a positive impact on behaviour, attendance and the quality of teaching, demonstrating the capacity for further sustained improvement. Sharper analysis of the school's performance at senior level is informing future plans. The system for tracking students' progress is still relatively new and there are one or two inconsistencies in the summary reports. However, the system has been used to successfully target Year 11 students working at the GCSE C/D borderline and the interventions have led to considerable improvements in results. Systems aimed at helping to drive and embed improvements and check on the impact of initiatives are much stronger; subject reviews, self-evaluation and action planning are securely in place. Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the academy and are focussed in their efforts to improve. They intervene quickly when issues are identified.

Middle managers are responding to the increased accountability and have been supported by well-considered professional development. Their confidence and capability are growing but the effectiveness of middle leadership is still variable. Governance is satisfactory. Governors know the academy and the local community well and are very supportive. They are developing an increasing awareness of their role but not yet providing sufficient challenge to senior leaders. The sponsor provides very strong, well-judged and effective support.

The curriculum is evolving well and is responsive to students' needs and the local context supported by very effective partnerships. Literacy development has a high priority. There is a planned approach to supporting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a thematic study and reflection opportunities in assembly. This is supported by broad range of extra-curricular activities, visits and sporting events. The academy works closely with external agencies and families to support the most vulnerable students but there is further work to do to cement links with all parents and carers. New strategies have been introduced to attract more parents and carers into the academy and to increase the two-way flow of information, but communication with the academy was a concern of a significant minority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and meet current requirements. The academy has worked hard and successfully to build a cohesive community and any form of discrimination is tackled quickly. Any gaps in achievement between particular groups of students are monitored carefully and there are indications that they are closing.

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 The South Leeds Academy, Leeds, LS10 2JU

Thank you for welcoming us to the academy. I would also like to thank those of you who filled in a questionnaire and spoke to us. We took full account of your views and those of staff, parents and carers who also completed questionnaires. Here is a summary of our findings which we hope will interest you.

- Examination results are improving but not quickly enough and you are not making the progress we would expect given your starting points on joining the academy.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall and there are examples of good teaching. Teachers use a good variety of resources but they do not always give you enough feedback on how well you are learning and what to do to improve.
- Behaviour is improving and is satisfactory. The number of exclusions is going down and attendance is improving.
- The sixth form is satisfactory and managed well. Pass rates are variable but are good on vocational courses. The partnership with Garforth gives access to a wide choice of courses.

The academy is improving but there are some important things that it needs to do better. We have given it a notice to improve. This means that the academy will be inspected again in about a year's time to make sure that it has improved. We have asked the Principal, the staff and governors to take a number of actions to make sure that you make better progress and achieve higher levels in all your subjects. These include:

- increasing the proportion of good and better teaching and learning
- improving the quality and consistency of the feedback you receive
- improving the quality and use of data to track your progress
- continuing to improve attendance.

The Principal is still new but she knows the academy well and has ambitious plans for the future. We hope that you will do everything that you can to help and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Jan Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector

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