

# South Axholme Community School

Burnham Road, Epworth, Doncaster, DN9 1BY

**Inspection dates** 30–31 January 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b> <b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Most students make good progress and learn well in many subjects. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has remained above the national average, and standards seen in many lessons are above average.
- Students who are behind with their reading and numeracy skills when they start at the academy, catch up quickly and those identified as disabled or having special educational needs make good progress.
- Teaching is good in most subjects. For the most part, lessons are stimulating and include interesting activities and experiences.
- Students enjoy attending the academy. They are safe and well looked after. Students behave very well and attendance is average. There is little bullying and there are few exclusions.
- The headteacher is a highly effective leader and exudes high expectations. She is well supported by a strong team of leaders and managers. Governors are well informed about the performance of the academy, and regularly challenge senior leaders to ensure that teaching and achievement continue to improve.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are some lessons where teachers do not give students enough time to think or work by themselves, or check sufficiently well on their understanding during the lesson. On occasions, the abilities of all students are not fully stretched, and the marking of students' work is not always helpful.
- Systems to assess how regularly different groups of students are attending lessons, and how well they are behaving, are not coordinated well enough. As a result, senior leaders do not have a clear overview of any inconsistencies that might occur between different students and subjects, and across different years.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 46 lessons, of which five were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to tutor groups.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, governors and academy staff, including senior and middle managers.
- Inspectors took account of the 76 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.
- They observed the academy's work and looked at a number of documents, including the academy's own data on current students' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, minutes of governors' meetings, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents pertaining to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Andrew Swallow, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Andrew Henderson	Additional Inspector
Johan MacKinnon	Additional Inspector
Susan Hall	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- South Axholme became an academy in December 2011. It is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, largely those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below that seen nationally.
- The proportion of students supported at the level known as school action is just below the proportion seen nationally, but just above for those at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- There are very few students from minority ethnic groups and none for who English is an additional language.
- The academy meets the current floor standard, which sets the government's minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Students follow a range of academic and vocational courses on the academy's site. The school offers no alternative, off-site provision.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good in all subjects, and that much more is outstanding by:
  - making sure activities and experiences are well matched to individual students' aptitudes
  - providing regular opportunities for students to work by themselves and deepen their understanding
  - ensuring that all teachers systematically check all students' understanding in lessons, and meet any emerging needs by adapting work when necessary, so that they learn exceptionally well
  - improving the quality of regular marking so that it points out why students are doing well, and provides advice about the next steps in their learning.
- Refine existing systems, to share more effectively the information held about the attendance and behaviour of different groups of students, in different subjects, and across all years, to identify and address swiftly any inconsistencies.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- The attainment of students on entry to the academy varies, but is generally similar to that of most schools. The vast majority achieve well and, as a consequence, by the end of Year 11 the proportions of students attaining five good GCSE results, and also when including English and mathematics, are above average. Overall attainment in art and design and science, the academy's former specialisms, is well-above average.
- Students known to be eligible for free school meals, disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve well, and attainment gaps between these students and their peers have reduced significantly since the previous inspection. This is because tracking arrangements have been improved, enabling underperformance to be tackled earlier and more successfully. The very small proportion of students from minority ethnic groups achieve in line with their peers. Well-conceived use of the pupil premium has successfully enhanced small-group teaching opportunities, providing additional time and staffing, and funding additional resources to boost students' reading and writing skills.
- Across the academy, and in most subjects, increasing numbers of students attain above-average outcomes in lessons and in their work. Many communicate with confidence, both orally and in writing, and show good mathematical skills. Regular opportunities to read in English lessons, during tutor time, and at lunchtimes, enhance students' understanding of written texts, their fluency and expressiveness.
- A very high number of parents who responded to Parent View believe that their children enjoy attending the academy and achieve well. Inspectors found this to be so in many lessons seen. For example, in a Year 8 drama lesson, students collaborated exceptionally well to explore the impact of mime, gesture and body language, in a short improvised scene, inspired by the teacher's enthusiasm and passion. Similarly, Year 10 students shared eagerly ideas about form, style and construction possibilities in an information and communication technology lesson on animation.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in most subjects, including English and mathematics, is good, but there are few examples of outstanding practice. Nonetheless, most students make good progress and achieve well in many subjects.
- Where teaching is at its best, teachers have high expectations and plan lessons carefully to interest and stimulate all learners. They create positive climates so that students engage quickly and enjoy their learning. For example, in a Year 8 science lesson on displacement, students persevered well to develop their thinking about the chemistry underpinning their observations, motivated by the teacher's constantly high expectations and challenging questions. Use of powerful images in a Year 8 geography lesson stimulated learners to consider the differences between densely and sparsely populated areas in the world, and to find out for themselves key examples.
- In the good lessons, teachers routinely check students' understanding, intervening when necessary, with notable impact on their learning. They provide well-conceived opportunities for students to enhance their communication skills, through sharing ideas and challenging each other's views, in small groups. In scenarios that require accurate mathematical understanding, they ensure that all students are confident in measuring and calculating, and in representing important data in graphs and charts. Teaching assistants are managed particularly well, supporting individuals and small groups of students with special educational needs to good effect, both in and out of lessons.
- Where teaching is not as effective as it might be, it does not provide enough stimulus or challenge. Too little is expected of some students, and they are not given activities that stretch

and excite them. Some teachers talk too much, spending, for example too long exploring examination requirements, at the expense of quickly immersing students in their learning, and inviting them to work things out for themselves. They do not take enough opportunity to listen to students and observe them at length, to check their understanding during lessons and so adapting work if necessary.

- The quality of marking across the school is variable; in some cases it is not frequent enough, and does not indicate why students are doing well or provide detailed feedback on how to improve.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Around the academy, students' behaviour is very good. They are extremely polite and courteous to adults and visitors. Parents indicate how positive students' attitudes are towards school life, and how much they enjoy the many extra-curricular activities and visits on offer. In lessons, students' attitudes are mostly very positive. On occasions, when learning is not inviting and motivating, the concentration of some students wanes, and they become restless and overly chatty.
- While overall attendance is average, and the proportions of fixed-term and permanent exclusions are low, the academy's information systems are not yet finely tuned to identify how well all groups of students are attending and behaving in lessons, across subjects and year groups and on a day-to-day basis. As a result, staff are unable to pinpoint, and address, any patterns that might be emerging.
- Most students are fully aware of unsafe situations and show confidence in dealing with them, should they occur. They are especially assured in talking about cyber and homophobic bullying. In their roles as academy councillors and prefects, they take active steps to minimise bullying in the academy.
- Students say that they always feel safe in the academy and are confident that they can get support if they have any concerns. Pastoral staff secure effectively the well-being of students whose circumstances may render them vulnerable, and ensure that they are fully integrated in the academy's daily experiences.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher is ambitious for all students and has raised expectations of staff, and students' aspirations, over time. Since the previous inspection, she has developed more robust checking arrangements that now provide an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and students' achievements. The curriculum has also been matched more closely to students' needs, and resources have been updated to ensure good access to information and communication technologies in all subjects.
- Changes in the senior leadership and among other leaders with particular responsibilities have sharpened the academy's self-evaluation procedures, although there remains scope for better coordination of information about the different groups of students' behaviour and attendance in lessons. A range of training experiences are now available to sustain good, and develop more outstanding, teaching. Performance management of staff is well organised, and new appraisal arrangements identify clearly the needs of individual staff. The impact of training is evaluated thoroughly, to determine its effectiveness and whether further steps are required. The headteacher makes the right decisions about teachers' movements up the salary scale on the basis of robust information about the quality of their teaching.
- The academy's curriculum is well matched to students' needs. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are particularly well catered for. There is a good range of academic courses, underpinned by the school's former art and science specialisms, with an appropriate

balance of vocational opportunities delivered on the academy's site. All precautions are taken to ensure that the small proportion of students entered early for GCSE examinations are ready, and that this action does not limit their potential.

- Extensive sporting, musical and performing experiences, and a wealth of extra-curricular activities, including links with schools in China and Uganda, make strong contributions to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The daily tutor programme helps to promote students' personal qualities and affords good opportunities to reinforce key reading skills. It supports effectively the academy's drive to promote equality of opportunity, and to tackle swiftly any discrimination that may arise.
- Parent View indicates that a very high proportion of parents would wholeheartedly recommend the academy. Good partnerships exist with local schools, colleges of further education, universities and community services. All have a positive impact on students' achievements.
- The local authority provides effective support through a school improvement consultant, and has been helpful in supporting general improvements in teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body receives regular and up-to-date information about the performance of the academy, including data about how well students are achieving. Through their links with senior leaders, many governors have a good understanding about the quality of teaching. Minutes of meetings show that they are confident in challenging the headteacher and senior staff. They reveal robust discussions about the value of spending decisions, in particular the allocation of pupil premium funding. For example, governors have authorised additional staffing for small groups, the purchase and distribution of laptops to enhance home learning, additional time for learning in English and mathematics and the purchase of bespoke materials to boost reading and writing skills. The headteacher provides governors with detailed information about the salaries of all staff and decisions about individual teachers' applications for promotion. As a result, governors have a good understanding of the effectiveness of the management of teachers' performance across the academy.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137742
<b>Local authority</b>	North Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	402768

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	898
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Barratt
<b>Principal</b>	Marie Lister
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01427 872121
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