

The Springfields Academy

Curzon Street, Calne, Wiltshire, SN11 0DS

Inspection dates

5–7 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- All students make exceptional progress in their communication, literacy and numeracy skills. They are superbly well prepared for independent living and future employment.
- Teaching is always good and is more often than not outstanding. Teachers are highly trained and skilful in boosting learning chances for students.
- The behaviour of students is outstanding and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is equally strong. Students support each other well and respect each other's views and opinions. They believe that the academy is a safe place and most believe that it cares for their needs exceedingly well.
- Visionary and resolute leadership, spearheaded by the Principal, senior leadership team and governors ensures that this academy is continually improving.
- The academy works exceptionally well with a wide range of other organisations and schools. The academy needs to make sure that it works consistently to the highest possible standards with social services.
- Provision for boarding is good and helps students to make outstanding progress in their personal and social development. The academy meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools. However, it needs to provide a special book for controlled drugs and make sure that food from the kitchen to the residential houses is kept hot.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons, almost all being joint observations with senior leaders. The team listened to students read, looked at their work and joined them at lunch times and during the evening in the residential houses. The lead inspector also visited the academy’s farm and observed students from other schools learning about small animal husbandry through one of the ‘Alternative learning programmes’ provided by the academy.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff, students and members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body. The lead inspector also spoke by telephone with a local headteacher who is working in partnership with the academy. She also met with an internationally renowned specialist in special educational needs who works with the academy on a regular basis, and who acts as a mentor to the Principal.
- Inspectors took account of the 45 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as questionnaires completed by 64 staff. Inspectors also met with two parents and took account of written comments sent by email to the academy by three parents
- Inspectors looked at documents showing how senior leaders check the effectiveness of the academy’s work. In addition, they examined records about behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. They also looked at how senior leaders and the governing body check staff performance.

Inspection team

Steffi Penny, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Bob Coburn

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Reed

Social Care Inspector

Wendy Anderson

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- All students have a statement of special educational needs. The vast majority of students have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A minority have autism spectrum disorders and a few have severe learning difficulties. Some students have a combination of these.
- Most students are from a White British background, speak English as their first language and are boys.
- All students on the academy roll board in one of four houses during the teaching week.
- The academy operates on two sites, one of which is a farm.
- Up to 500 students from 38 primary and 22 secondary schools, who are not on the academy roll, attend various sessions at the academy or farm as part of 'Alternative learning programmes'.
- The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is above average. This is government funding that the academy receives for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are in local authority care and the children of military personnel on active service overseas.
- The academy has its own in-house 'Extended services team' consisting of counsellors, therapists, and a psychiatric nurse, along with parent advocate, liaison officer and support advisors.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the quality of safeguarding from adequate to outstanding by improving the robustness in the way that the academy, including the governing body, makes referrals and consults with social services.
- Ensure that all marking enables students to push themselves harder to reach the next level in their learning with minimum adult direction.
- Provide a controlled drugs book which has been designed specifically for the recording of the administration of controlled drugs.
- Review the practices and resources in place for taking hot food from the academy kitchen to the residential accommodation, in particular to ensure that food temperatures are maintained at appropriate levels and there is a sufficient number of 'hot boxes' provided.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- All groups of students make outstanding progress from their generally low starting points to achieve challenging targets. Students follow highly relevant, well-thought-out programmes and gain a range of worthwhile qualifications that prepare them extremely well for their future lives. In addition, those students not on the academy roll but who take advantage of the 'Alternative learning programmes' do equally well.
- Boys and girls felt that the academy tries very hard to make sure that girls are not disadvantaged just because there are fewer of them in the academy. Students appreciate the 'girlie sessions', the positive promotion of women in senior roles and the visit of a female rugby coach. This makes girls feel equally valued, raising their self-esteem.
- Being a specialist sports college means that students have a wide range of exciting sports activities which inspire them to do their very best and increase confidence and enthusiasm. It also helps to improve skills that they can use throughout their lives such as the teamwork skills developed in the sports that are transferred into the classroom. For example, based on the game 'Minecraft', a Year 10 group has been successfully collaborating on designing a map for use by younger students. The aim of the map is to involve two islands, each with individual unique resources, with students having to trade with each other to complete set quests.
- The academy is narrowing the gap on the average point scores (how schools compare examination results) particularly for those students known to be entitled to the pupil premium funding. There has been a consistent increase in these scores over the last three years, and in 2012 scores for all students went up substantially. The academy is not complacent and the introduction of BTEC National Diplomas will further increase the capacity for students to attain higher level qualifications.
- A few students take mathematics GCSE early. This does not limit the attainment of the most able; rather, their successes increase self-confidence and their desire for even greater challenges.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The majority of teaching seen during the inspection was outstanding, as it is over time, as reflected in students' excellent achievement. In all lessons, a key focus is on developing students' social, communication and literacy skills. Work is always matched carefully with students' needs, reflects teachers' high expectations and is appropriately marked.
- In some lessons there is just a teacher, the students, and no other adults. This is because other adults are only used when they are really needed to support learning. Sometimes adults are used to help demonstrate certain skills and then to supervise students doing things for themselves. At other times, students' learning difficulties are so complex that they need an adult to help them with even the simplest things, such as tying a knot.
- Assessment in lessons is of a very high standard. Teachers have highly developed questioning skills that mean they can unpick just how well students have understood what they are being taught. They also use a wide range of resources, including modern technology, to help explain things in different ways.
- Lessons are designed so that students can discover things for themselves. This makes learning exciting and vividly memorable. For example, in a biology lesson one boy exclaimed, 'Sir, you have got to look at this, it's awesome!', as he viewed stomata on the underside of a freshly picked leaf for the first time.
- High levels of trust and respect were clearly seen in all lessons. For example, when a mixed group of students discussed human sexual reproduction, there was no silliness, but students asked pertinent questions to gain a clearer understanding about their bodies.
- Students' books are neat and tidy, demonstrating the respect that they have for learning and

their teacher. There is some inconsistency in the way that teachers show students how well they are doing in comparison with the National Curriculum levels. On occasion, this hinders students from being able to push themselves harder to reach the next level with minimum adult direction.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Through excellent relationships with staff, students learn how to control their emotions and they display outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning. Learning is made interesting and they are taught in a happy, friendly and courteous environment, so they want to learn and attendance is high.
- Students know where to get help if they have any difficulties. Students say that they feel safe in the academy, including when boarding. Students often find boarding tricky at first, but quickly get used to it because of the calm nature of the staff. One student said, 'I can contact my parents during the week, but I don't because I am too busy.'
- Students appreciate how much the academy has done for them and speak with spontaneous affection about the academy. One said, 'Every single person gets the attention they deserve'. They reported that the academy had helped them to recognise and explain difficulties that they had so that they can overcome them: 'The academy has helped me control my anger' and 'If you get it wrong here, it's ok and the academy will help you get it right.'
- Behaviour management systems are comprehensive and incidents that occur in the academy are carefully recorded and acted upon appropriately. Students say that there are sometimes disagreements but that these did not constitute bullying. They are very complimentary about how the staff deal with any behaviour incidents, because they are decisive, quick, and fair.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- All staff have a relentless focus on improving students' achievement, increasing their resilience and challenging them to do their very best in everything they do. Staff lead by example and they are very keen to continue to improve and extend their professional expertise.
- The checks made on the quality of teaching and learning are excellent. Students' progress is carefully measured and clear guidance is given to staff to help them improve students' learning, including their social and communication skills. Observations of lessons and the regular monitoring of the quality of work and marking in students' books are used very effectively to improve teachers' practice.
- The academy has a significant impact on improving the provision for students with special educational needs locally and nationally. For example, following an academy trip to the Arctic, 'The coldest classroom on Earth', the inspirational Principal extended the opportunity for extreme classroom experiences to almost 200 other special schools. Most recently this involved an inter-school group of 33 students and their mentors being led by the Maasai tribe as they trekked along the rift valley in Tanzania in the 'The hottest classroom on Earth'.
- The curriculum provides an exceptional range of opportunities for students and externally certificated courses, include GCSEs. Job-related courses and 'Alternative learning programmes' are taught by professional staff on the academy site. The rooms and specialist equipment have been carefully designed to copy what it would be like working as a car mechanic, hairdresser or chef.
- Students' social, moral and cultural development are nurtured exceptionally well. The academy farm gives students the chance to learn empathy and how to care for and nurture small animals, including donkeys, goats and pigs. International links with other schools ensure students can experience different countries and cultures, with some students recently having an introduction to Mandarin.
- Parents and carers regularly attend meetings at the academy and are kept well informed about their child's progress at least weekly, through a home/academy diary. Responses to the online Parent View questionnaires are very mixed, with some being extremely happy with all the

academy does and others who are very unhappy and would prefer their child to attend a different school.

■ The governance of the school:

- Safeguarding is adequate overall, but, on a few occasions the academy has not always robustly implemented procedures and some actions taken lack rigour. The procedures to screen and recruit staff are exemplary and reflect the high quality training that the governing body have received. The procedures for risk assessment and health and safety are robust. The governing body have all the skills needed to thoroughly check data about students’ progress, attendance and exclusions. They have a thorough knowledge of the quality of teaching and learning in the academy. With this knowledge, the academy’s budget is used highly effectively to reward those staff who are doing the very best. In addition to staff being held to account against personal goals and ambitions, there are also three targets that have a common thread throughout the academy. These three targets are reviewed annually against the academy’s development plan and, through this system, teaching, leadership and management have continued to improve. The pupil premium is very effectively used to raise achievement for those who are eligible. Examples include bespoke literacy support and specialist programmes for equine study. Also, other funds made by the academy, for example from the alternative and job-related courses, are wisely spent to the benefit of all students. The governing body are vigilant at ensuring the well-being of staff, through mentoring, coaching and training programmes.

Outcomes for residential pupils	are outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	is outstanding
Residential pupils’ safety	is adequate
Leadership and management of the residential provision	is good

- The residential experience helps students to make outstanding progress in their personal and social development. Students learn how to better manage their emotional and behavioural issues and to live harmoniously together. The established daily routines and known expectations of behaviour help students to feel safe and secure.
- The residential provision provides students with a highly inclusive living environment where they are fully accepted for their uniqueness, talents and abilities. Individuals feel valued and show respect to others.
- Staff have high aspirations for all students. Residential and teaching staff work closely together to provide an integrated and seamless delivery of support, tailored to meet the needs of individuals. Students learn life skills which help them to move successfully into adulthood.
- Students benefit from the wide range of stimulating extra-curricular and leisure opportunities and from their participation in the development of the academy. They have fun and their involvement increases their self-esteem and resilience.
- The excellent healthcare and pastoral arrangements support students’ well-being and progress. All medication given to students is diligently recorded; however, the academy does not record the giving of controlled drugs in a record which has been specifically designed for this purpose.
- Food is of a generally good standard and plentiful; students enjoy their meals. Hot food is transported to one residential unit for some meals; however, the current arrangements do not adequately secure the temperature of the food.
- Excellent relationships exist between staff and students and there is a climate of openness and trust. This environment supports students to feel sufficiently confident to approach adults and to talk freely about any concerns they may have. This effective communication contributes to keeping students safe from the risk of possible harm.
- The safeguarding of students is central within the operation of the residential provision. Policies

and procedures for child protection are in place. However, these are not always robustly implemented and some actions taken lack rigour. Excellent recruitment and vetting processes contribute to ensuring that only suitable people have contact with students.

- Staff are well trained and receive good support to look after children well. Care has been taken to ensure that each house provides a living environment that is able to effectively meet the individual needs of the students living therein.
- The four houses provide a homely standard of accommodation that offers students sufficient space and privacy. The rolling programme of refurbishment and maintenance continues to improve the standard of the accommodation.

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>

Boarding/Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	137470
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	403703

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ninna Gibson
Headteacher	Trystan Williams
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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