

# The West Grantham Academy St Hugh's

The Avenue, Dysart Road, Grantham, NG31 7PX

**Inspection dates** 4–5 June 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.

- Standards and progress have both improved steadily since the academy opened.
- Students in Years 7 and 8 have responded well to new arrangements for teaching reading and to changes in mathematics. They are now making rapid progress in English and mathematics.
- Students are making good progress in Years 10 and 11. The academy is on target to achieve results close to national averages this year, and exceed them in some vocational subjects.
- Teaching has improved, particularly in English and mathematics, and students' attitudes to learning are good. They contribute enthusiastically to lessons and respond to challenging tasks well.
- Students are courteous and polite. They enjoy coming to school, feel safe and recognise the improvements that have taken place in the last two years.
- The 'Pride Pathway' programme of rewards and consequences is valued highly by students. It has brought about much-improved behaviour in lessons and better attendance.
- The Principal has been a driving force in turning the academy around. The action taken by leaders to improve teaching in reading and mathematics has been particularly successful.
- Checks on the progress of individual students are thorough. They lead to good support where it is needed for students in all years. Extra help to prepare students for examinations is also good.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are inconsistencies in teaching that slow the pace of learning for some students. Marking does not always help students to improve their work. Some activities do not provide enough challenge for all students.
- Academy leaders do not analyse the data they have about students' progress in enough depth. This means they do not always know how well classes and different groups of students are doing.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 30 lessons taught by 27 teachers. Eight lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also made shorter visits to a number of other lessons.
- They held meetings with the Principal and other senior leaders, teachers with subject responsibilities, groups of students, the Chief Executive Officer of the Trust and members of the governing body. An inspector also held a telephone discussion with an adviser from the Department for Education who had been working in the academy.
- Inspectors looked at students' work in lessons and listened to younger students reading.
- Inspectors considered a range of school documents, covering policies, self-evaluation and school development, the analysis of assessment data, monitoring of teaching, the courses taught, safeguarding and students' welfare, checks on the performance of staff, and parents', carers' and students' views of the academy.
- In coming to their conclusions, inspectors took account of the views of the 41 parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View) and responses from the 32 staff who completed an inspection questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Frank Knowles, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alan Jarvis	Additional Inspector
Annabel Bolt	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The West Grantham Academy St Hugh's is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It is a non-selective school in an area where grammar schools select students by ability. There is a girls' school nearby and the academy has more boys than girls on its roll.
- The West Grantham Academy St Hugh's converted to become an academy on 1 February 2011. When its predecessor school, St Hugh's Church of England Mathematics and Computing College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- St Hugh's is part of the West Grantham Academies Trust, which is a federation of four academies, including two nearby primary academies (Earl of Dysart and Spitalgate) and a secondary academy (Charles Read) in another part of Lincolnshire. It is a Church of England academy within the Diocese of Lincoln.
- A very large majority of students come from White British backgrounds. A few students come from a range of different minority ethnic backgrounds. Most of these students are from Eastern European heritages, often speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported by additional funding through the pupil premium, which includes those known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and those from service families, is much higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The main area of support relates to behavioural, social and emotional difficulties.
- The academy makes regular use of Grantham College to provide vocational courses for students in Years 10 and 11. The academy also uses placements at 'The Link' facility at The West Grantham Academy Earl of Dysart to provide alternative learning arrangements for students with short-term behavioural needs.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standards for secondary schools, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and ensure that the rest is consistently good by checking that all teachers:
  - mark students' work regularly, indicating specifically what students need to do to improve their work
  - ask probing questions of students to extend learning further
  - design activities that challenge students at the right level for their abilities.
- Make greater use of its own data on students' progress to identify where improvement is needed in classes, subjects or for different groups of students.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the academy with standards in English and mathematics that are below average, with very few who have achieved higher levels in their primary school. The progress they make has improved and standards have increased steadily since the academy was opened. In 2012, results were still well below average, particularly in English and science. In vocational subjects, however, students gained average or above-average results.
- Changes since 2011 to the way reading is taught have brought about very significant improvements in English in Year 7 and 8, with students making very rapid progress. Changes this year in mathematics teaching have already shown similar gains with the same students.
- In Years 10 and 11, students receive good support in the run-up to GCSE and other examinations, and are now making good progress. Students are on target to achieve results much closer to national averages in English, mathematics and science and for the academy to meet the government's floor standard. Their good progress in vocational subjects indicates they are again on target for average and above-average results.
- Part of the reason why achievement has improved is the growing recognition in the academy that students need to make more than the routinely expected progress to reach levels and grades that will serve them well in their future education, employment or training. Students' targets are becoming more challenging, therefore, with corresponding acceleration of learning.
- In lessons, students make generally good progress. Students in Year 8 made good progress in their engineering lesson when they quickly learnt to use a new piece of software to display three-dimensional objects. A group of students in Year 11 preparing for a mathematics examination made exceptional progress when they set and solved examination questions related to the areas of shapes.
- Students in Year 11 supported through the pupil premium left school in 2012 with results that were half a grade below other students in English and nearly a grade below them in mathematics. There are clear indications of a narrower gap in the current year. In Years 7 and 8, students supported through the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding have made much more progress in reading than other students.
- The progress of students studying at Grantham College is good, and their courses there prepare them well for the world of work. As a result, almost all students leave the academy for places in education, employment or training. Short placements in 'The Link' support successful reintegration into mainstream classes at the academy.
- Students who speak English as an additional language are well supported. They make better progress than other students and achieve higher results.
- Low-attaining students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action make good progress. The academy is aware that those students supported through school action plus make less progress than they should. Changes made this year to accelerate their progress are too recent to show significant gains.
- The academy has entered students early for GCSE examinations in mathematics. This has not always resulted in higher grades on re-taking the examination, and this policy is under review.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Lessons are generally well structured and proceed at a good pace. Students are clear about what they should learn in each lesson and teachers usually plan time at the end of lessons to check on learning. Students are often involved actively in working in groups or pairs, which they value.
- Relationships between students and teachers are good and focus on high achievement, with teachers often referring to the levels or grades at which students are working. Students value the support they receive from teachers and the time they take to discuss their work with them. Students in Year 7 are especially positive about the teaching they receive.
- In many lessons, teachers ask searching questions to make students think. For example, in an English lesson, students in Year 8 working on persuasive writing responded very well to questions that challenged them to explore their ideas in more depth and expand their answers. Similarly challenging questioning was used very effectively to promote understanding in an English lesson in Year 11. However, questioning is not always as effective.
- Many teachers make good use of the information they have about students' additional learning needs to plan work that matches their capabilities. Many make good use of additional support and extension sheets. In a physical education lesson, tasks for students in Year 10 matched their needs very well and each student knew precisely what to do to improve their serving skills in tennis. However, the match of challenge to students' abilities is not as close in all lessons.
- The teaching of reading has been improved radically using a computer-based scheme for all students in Years 7 and 8. Students enjoy using it and say their reading has improved greatly. Their progress in reading, and in English, is much faster than it was. It is supplemented by additional support for the weakest readers. These students do not have the skills they need to sound out unfamiliar words. The reading coordinator and apprentice are currently being trained in phonics (the sounds that letters make) but this training has not yet extended to all teaching assistants.
- The needs of disabled students, those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are identified carefully. Individual plans and targeted support mean that most of these students achieve well. Students supported through school action plus have not made the same progress as other students and the academy is currently revising its practice to ensure that they make at least the same progress as their peers.
- The academy's policy on marking students' work is not consistently applied by all teachers. Students do not always receive specific guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. Examples of good practice show insightful assessment, clear subject-specific guidance, and thoughtful responses from students. This good practice was not seen universally in all students' work books.

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

- Students behave well around the academy and are courteous to adults and to each other. In lessons, behaviour is generally good, even in the few cases when teaching does not engage students actively in their learning. Older students noted some disruption to learning, but they felt these situations were handled well by most teachers. The academy's records show a reduced number of incidents.

- The Pride Pathway approach to behaviour has been a marked success. Older students felt it has improved behaviour significantly, and that the rewards involved have motivated students to behave well and put greater emphasis on their work. Younger students were equally positive. Students of all ages welcomed the regular rewards and celebrations that the pathway provides.
- Students enjoy taking responsibilities. Younger students particularly value the mentoring roles undertaken by older students. Students' views are surveyed regularly and influence the way the behaviour system is managed.
- Students feel safe at school and know how to keep safe; for example, when using the internet. This view is reflected by their parents and carers. Students are very aware of the different forms of bullying, including homophobic name calling and cyber-bullying. Students know that rare incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff, using the Pride Pathway consequences. Anti-bullying promotions and the appointment of an anti-bullying coordinator have supported this improvement.
- The Pride Pathway involves communication with parents and carers for positive as well as negative reasons, and the process has involved parents and carers more in their child's education. Parents are generally positive about behaviour, although a small number feel it could be improved further. A programme to support students with more challenging behaviour and the use of the Trust's 'Link' facility have led to improved behaviour and better attitudes to learning among participating students. It has also contributed to a reduced number of exclusions.
- Attendance has improved and is now at the national average. The academy has created new staff roles for attendance and family liaison, and home visits have increased in number. The academy is now quicker to follow up absences and this new approach has supported better attendance. Punctuality to lessons has improved as sanctions on lateness to lessons have been included in the Pride Pathway.

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

- Since the school became an academy there has been a very significant change in its culture. Older students commented that the academy had improved greatly under the leadership of the current Principal and senior team. Students value their presence around the academy, the ease of discussion with them and the support they now receive from staff.
- The Principal has a clear vision for the future of the academy. The changes in reading and mathematics and the introduction of the Pride Pathway have all been well thought out approaches to issues facing the academy. They have brought about very significant improvement in a short timescale.
- The Principal inspires governors, staff and students and involves them well in achieving this vision. This has raised staff morale. A 'change team' of staff meets regularly and has influenced academy policy. A new initiative known as 'triads' involves staff working across subjects.
- Senior leaders check on the quality of teaching regularly and are accurate in their evaluations. Where necessary, staff are supported through coaching from experienced practitioners. Annual checks on teachers' performance are rigorous. Pay increases are not awarded unless teaching is good and students are making good progress.
- Through its Chief Executive Officer, the Trust holds the academy to account for its performance

and provides support for the Principal. The academy also makes very good use of external consultants for specific review and development activities. It has benefited from feedback from advisers from the Department for Education. Several teachers have worked in other academies in the Trust in support or mentoring roles.

- Funding through the pupil premium is used well to provide additional support, access to resources and enrichment activities. This funding is sometimes supplemented from the normal academy budget to make similar provision available across a year group.
- The curriculum this year includes a wider range of GCSE courses with less dependence on vocational courses, although there is still a good range of these, including some provided through Grantham College. The progress and attendance of those educated off the academy site is checked carefully by academy staff, who attend the college with students.
- Subject lessons build in opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, in addition to those provided through registration periods and assemblies. The academy promotes equality of opportunity well and tackles all forms of discrimination robustly.
- The academy has a good understanding of its strengths and areas where improvements are needed. The detail of its self-evaluation is accurate. It leads to clear plans, and the actions taken are effective. However, leaders have a more generous view than inspectors of the academy's overall performance.
- Senior leaders have put in place a very thorough system for checking the progress of individual students but do not analyse the data in sufficient depth to identify which groups of students (for example, different classes, different subjects or those from different backgrounds) are making the most and the least progress during the year. Action to remedy underachievement is not always as sharply focused as it could be.
- The academy holds its subject and other middle leaders to account well through regular subject reviews and discussions with them on students' performance. The discussions do not benefit from the progress of different classes or groups of students that could help identify outstanding practice to share and the areas where underachievement needs tackling.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body, known as the board of directors, has a good understanding of the academy through regular reports from the Principal, reports from the Chief Executive Officer and personal visits from directors. It holds the academy to account for its performance, challenging the Principal over areas of underachievement. Directors ensure that pay increases are clearly linked to performance.
  - All directors have been trained in safeguarding matters and the board ensures that statutory requirements are fully met. It has ensured that the academy maintains a healthy financial balance. Directors have a good understanding of the way pupil premium funding has been used.



## 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>	136476
<b>Local authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	412880

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>	560
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alison Fox
<b>Headteacher</b>	Louise Bennett (Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01476 405200
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