

St George's Academy

Westgate, Sleaford, NG34 7PP

Inspection dates 15–16 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The academy is improving strongly due to the incisive leadership and clear direction provided by the principal. He has the confidence and support of staff, governors, parents and students.
- Leaders have established an exciting and ambitious range of academic subjects and work-related courses, which respond to students' aptitudes and interests. Students value the breadth of learning opportunities.
- Learning outside the classroom encompasses a diverse range of learning experiences, educational visits, residential trips, sporting, artistic and cultural opportunities that support students' personal, social, moral and spiritual development.
- Students are proud to be associated with the academy. They wear their uniform smartly and with pride. They enjoy coming to the academy and feel safe. Attendance has risen to above the national average.
- Students gain a good understanding of British values, participate in democracy and learn to be productive citizens.
- The vast majority of students are courteous, polite, friendly and helpful. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good so that the academy is a peaceful, harmonious community.
- In recent years, students have not progressed as well as other students nationally. Current information shows that students are now making better progress compared to results in 2014 and are on track to achieve standards in line with the national figures.
- Teaching is improving strongly. Work with external consultants and schools in the St George's Academy Partnership provide strong support to improve the skills and practice of teachers.
- Disadvantaged students and disabled students benefit from well-planned support and make good progress.
- The sixth form provision is good and students taking work-related learning courses achieve particularly well, given their below-average starting points.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers provide enough stretch and challenge for all students, particularly the most able.
- Students do not have sufficient opportunities to write at length across a range of subjects, particularly the less able and those on work-related courses.
- Some teachers do not always act in line with the academy's marking policy and provide specific advice for students about how to improve their work, and check that students respond.
- Not enough students achieve the higher grades in the academic subjects studied at A Level.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 lessons. Of these observations, 15 were completed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also observed students at breaks and lunchtimes, and attended assemblies and tutorial periods.
- Discussions were held with students, the principal and other staff, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 117 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as correspondence received from parents. They also took account of the 73 responses to staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documents, including samples of students' work, information about students' progress, the academy's development plan and self-evaluation, records of any poor behaviour, records of governing body meetings and safeguarding documents.
- Inspectors listened to students read and observed reading support lessons.

Inspection team

Sherry Gladwin, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Elaine Hamilton	Additional Inspector
Clive Allen	Additional Inspector
Steven Goldsmith	Additional Inspector
Nicholas Daws	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well below average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The academy has an above-average proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, who receive support through the pupil premium, is below average. This is additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- A very small number of students are educated off-site at Acorn Free School (pupil referral unit) in Lincoln and First Steps Vocational Training Centre in Boston.
- The academy is a member of St George's Academy Partnership, which provides teacher training in a wide range of subjects. Members of the partnership include St George's Academy, Sleaford; St George's Academy, Ruskington; Lincoln Castle Academy; Sir Robert Pattinson Academy; Kesteven and Grantham Girls School, Grantham; Carre's Grammar School; University Academy, Holbeach; and Banovallum School, Horncastle.
- The academy is a sponsor-led academy. The lead sponsor is Graham Arnold (Chair of Governors at St George's Academy) and co-sponsors are Lincoln University and Lincolnshire County Council.
- The principal took up his post at the academy in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching and raise achievement by:
 - ensuring that teachers set challenging work for the most-able students, particularly in the sixth form, so that students achieve the highest grades in academic subjects
 - ensuring that all teachers mark students' work in line with the academy's policy, providing specific advice to students about how they can improve their work and checking that students follow their advice
 - providing extended writing opportunities for all students across the curriculum, particularly for the less able and those studying vocational courses.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The principal and governors successfully communicate high expectations for the quality of teaching and students' achievement, behaviour and attitudes. Staff, parents and students understand and fully share the academy's drive for improvement. Accurate self-evaluation contributes to continuous improvement because the correct priorities emerge from close analysis, and feed into the school improvement plan and performance management targets for staff.
- Teaching is improving strongly because senior leaders are robust in their monitoring of teaching. Lesson observations and examination of students' work identify areas for development. Teachers work in small groups to share ideas from lesson observations in order to improve their classroom teaching. Effective support from external consultants and colleagues in partner schools is helping to improve teaching, particularly in English and mathematics, so that all groups of students now make good progress. Although the great majority of the most-able students make good progress, these students do not always benefit from a high level of challenge and support, including in the sixth form.
- The academy uses the pupil premium effectively to help disadvantaged students receive the academic and social support necessary to help them make good progress in their learning and development. As a result, disadvantaged students have closed gaps rapidly with their classmates and with other students nationally. Current progress data show continuing improvement, but the gap in mathematics is similar to last year. Senior staff track spending of the pupil premium and check its impact on students' results.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity effectively. Aspirational targets are set for all groups of students and well-planned, timely support is available to assist those who need additional help to make good progress. All groups of students are reaching higher standards than they did last year so that any differences between groups have reduced considerably. Leaders ensure that students' behaviour and attitudes support their learning. They have put in place a range of actions to improve behaviour for learning such as 'mindball', which is the academy's fun approach to developing students' concentration and learning relaxation techniques, and the 'reflective room', where students explore the reasons behind any unacceptable behaviour and how they can become more effective learners. Fixed-term and permanent exclusions have fallen considerably and these are now below the national average. Attendance has improved so that, this year, it is above last year's national average.
- Students attending off-site provision at Acorn Free School and First Steps Vocational Training Centre have good attendance and make good progress because staff telephone and visit alternative placements regularly in order to keep a close eye on students. Staff ensure that placements are safe and that students are kept safe.
- The quality of subject and other middle leadership has improved. Regular meetings between senior leaders and subject leaders help to closely track students' progress and the quality of teaching. Subject and middle leaders have appraisal targets that are predicated on good achievement for all students. Mentoring by senior leaders and support from external consultants and partner schools have also helped to build leadership skills. Recent changes to the leadership of the English and science departments are leading to good improvements for students.
- Because the academy is independent of the local authority, it has not been involved in providing support to improve teaching and learning.
- The academy's arrangements to keep students safe and secure are effective and meet statutory requirements. Leaders ensure that staff are trained in safeguarding and child protection. Teachers are aware of how to spot dangers of abuse and follow the process for reporting any concerns. Leaders understand the dangers of child sexual exploitation and recruitment of young people by extremist groups. They ensure that students and their parents understand these dangers. Assemblies, academy newsletters, parents' evenings and support materials on the academy's website keep students and parents informed and able to spot danger when online or using social networking sites.
- A very broad range of subjects is available to students. Leaders have responded effectively to create a

vast range of academic and work-related learning courses that meet the interest and aptitudes of students. The diverse subjects on offer allow students to study for GCSEs, BTECs, NVQs, AS level and A level. Classroom learning is enhanced through the excellent range of educational visits, residential, trips, after school and lunchtime clubs, and booster and master classes in many subjects.

- A major strength of the academy is the strong promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students have opportunities to take responsibility for shaping the academy and they can take on a variety of leadership roles, including house captains, school council, eco council, mentoring, fundraising for local charities like the hospice, and volunteering with local organisations such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau. This is just to name a few of the opportunities available. Assemblies, visiting speakers, and the personal, social and health education programme, help to make students aware of health issues, and current local and national political issues. Students understand British values and the rule of law. They also understand the dangers of extremism. There are many opportunities for students to participate in democracy. Students elect representatives to the academy or eco councils, and participate in interview panels that appoint staff. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- A full-time careers adviser and administration assistant provide good-quality impartial careers advice to students. Effective advice allows students to plan their career pathways into further education, training and employment. Visits to careers fairs and universities raise students' aspirations and support an above-average proportion of students to gain places at university, including Oxford and Cambridge.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is effective. Governors bring a range of experience and skills to their role. They know the academy well and identify areas of strength and weakness. Governors visit regularly. The informative reports from the principal, together with regular presentations from heads of department and senior leaders, keep governors abreast of developments with the academy's development plan and in the academy.
- Governors are trained in the analyses of students' performance data and in safeguarding. They track students' behaviour, attitudes, attendance and achievement closely and ask challenging questions of senior leaders, which helps to focus senior leaders on areas for improvement in the academy.
- Governors receive feedback about the quality of teaching on a regular basis from senior leaders and external consultants. The requirement for all staff to produce good teaching is a prerequisite of pay increases and promotions. Governors manage the principal's performance management with external support. Staff appraisal targets are linked closely to the principal's targets, and are focused on the outcomes of the academy's self-evaluation and objectives set out in the academy development plan.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. The vast majority of students show high levels of respect, courtesy and politeness. Students engage readily in discussions about their work and they are keen to help visitors by, for example, courteously holding doors open for them. The academy's values underpin the collaborative attitudes that students show to one another and to adults. Students' positive attitudes to learning mean that the academy is purposeful, peaceful and harmonious.
- Students understand the difference between right and wrong. Full consultation with students and staff helped to review the academy's values recently. The vast majority of students abide by the high expectations set out in these values. The core values, including respect, teamwork, tolerance, opportunity, ambition and excellence, are appreciated and shared by most students in and out of the classroom.
- Students enjoy coming to school, as shown in their above-average attendance. Students have a love of learning and value education and the opportunities that it can open up for them. Parents are more aware of the value of good attendance and the school has worked successfully with them to improve attendance. Unexplained absence is dealt with early on the first day of absence and the academy does not allow holidays in term time.
- The academy uses a range of external agencies to support students who face challenges in their lives or

with learning effectively. Counselling is provided through what the academy calls its 'Leicester Street' provision and learning mentors, and the analytical work that tracks students' progress. Close follow-up of any behaviour incidents by student support managers mean that fixed-term and permanent exclusions are now below the national average, and behavioural incidents across the academy have reduced. Case studies show that disabled students and those who have special educational needs are supported effectively. Those students who have challenging behaviour are helped to manage their own behaviour and learn to contribute to academy life.

- Students respond well to their teachers' high expectations. They listen to teachers attentively and work hard to produce work of a good standard and quality of presentation. They engage with teachers' questions and respond with clarity, thought and a good level of maturity.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Across all year groups, most students feel safe in the academy.
- The extensive range of subjects and opportunities available means that students are well informed about healthy lifestyles and understand how to assess risk when in the community. Education, for example, in drugs, road safety, the safe use of social networking sites, cyber-bullying, and risks of radicalisation and child sexual exploitation, allow students to gain understanding of risks and develop good insight.
- The academy records and reports any unacceptable behaviour to parents. Teachers deal with racist and sexist incidences firmly. Posters recognising homosexual role models help students learn acceptance and tolerance.
- A small minority of students and parents expressed some concerns about bullying. In discussion with inspectors, the vast majority of students expressed confidence in their teachers to care for and help them resolve issues relating to bullying. Students are confident about sharing any concerns that they have with staff and they are willing to report to teachers any concerns they have about friends.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved due to good input from external consultants and the partnerships with other local schools. Teachers take good notice of advice and they are keen to improve. Work in small groups help to develop aspects of teaching. This is leading to good skills in questioning. Teachers use questions effectively to probe students' understanding, generate reflection and stimulate class discussions. This is helping to extend students' skills in speaking and listening.
- Good collaboration in the classroom between teachers, trainee teachers and teaching assistants mean that there is good-quality support work in the classroom and in small groups to support students who have special educational needs. Online resources and creative learning activities motivate and engage learners effectively, and support them in acquiring knowledge and skills that are appropriate to their age and ability.
- In line with the academy's policy, most teachers set high expectations for the quality and presentation of students' work.
- Teachers assess students' work regularly and accurately so that they track students' progress closely. Careful analysis results in teachers identifying the gaps in students' knowledge and understanding. Teachers then plan learning to address these 'gap areas'. This strategy is proving effective and students stay on track to achieve ambitious targets. However, not all of the most able achieve the ambitious targets that are set. Sometimes, learning activities do not stretch and challenge students enough, particularly the most-able students.
- Reading, writing, communication and mathematics are taught effectively. The introduction of reading initiatives, including online programs, is helping to raise the reading ages for the large majority of students. There has been an impressive increase in the number of books students have borrowed over the

past two years. The quality of teaching in mathematics has improved over the past year due to close monitoring by the head of department. Although the quality of writing has improved, students do not have enough opportunities to write at length across a range of subjects, particularly the less able and those studying for work-related courses. This slows their progress.

- An examination of students' books shows that marking has improved over the past academic year and that most teachers mark students' work regularly. Although most teachers also provide helpful advice to students about how to improve their work, advice is not always specific enough and students' responses do not show that they have taken notice of teachers' advice. This means that they do not always learn from their mistakes.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Across the academy, standards have improved in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, when current performance is compared with the academy's results in 2014.
- In the majority of year groups, students started at the academy with attainment that was broadly average. In 2014, in Year 11, a below-average proportion of students left the academy with five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. This year, students are on track to make better progress and achieve results that are in line with the national average for 2014.
- Rates of progress have also improved. In 2014, fewer Year 11 students than expected made good progress in English and mathematics. Progress in mathematics was better than progress in English. Currently, students are on track to make better progress in 2015 so that rates of progress will compare favourably with the national figures for 2014.
- In 2014, disadvantaged students in Year 11 did not attain as well as classmates in English and mathematics but they did narrow the gap rapidly on classmates and other students nationally. Disadvantaged students were more than two thirds of a GCSE grade behind their classmates in English and two thirds of a GCSE grade behind in mathematics. In comparison with students nationally, they were approximately a GCSE grade behind in English and over two thirds of a GCSE grade behind in mathematics. School information shows that disadvantaged students have made good progress this year in English and mathematics to continue to narrow the gap between them and classmates.
- In 2014, disabled students and those who have special educational needs in Year 11 did not progress as well as other students in the academy. Their progress in mathematics was slightly better than their progress in English. The quality of the special educational needs provision has improved so that disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress in a range of subjects including English and mathematics. Currently, these students are on track to make significant improvements and achieve much better outcomes in 2015.
- Some of the most-able students did not make good progress in 2014. An improved supplementary programme – including master classes, presentations at Lincoln University, revision classes and other experiences – is helping to target support for the most-able Year 11 students. These students are on track to have made better progress in 2015 than they did in 2014.
- The academy entered students early for GCSEs in 2014. Early entries are no longer used.
- The proportion of students from a minority ethnic group is very small. These students made good progress in 2014 and continue to do so.
- The Year 7 'catch-up' funding is used effectively to boost the reading and other key skills of those who join the academy with attainment that is below the nationally expected level.

The sixth form provision is good

- From below-average starting points, students make good progress and achieve close to average results by the time they leave the sixth form. Results in work-related learning courses are above the national average. Progress in academic courses is slower. The academy accepts students with lower entry grades than found nationally since most students study a combination of academic and work-related learning courses.
- Good leadership and management of the sixth form have ensured that the range of subjects available reflects the aptitude of students and engages their interests. The wide range of academic subjects and work-related learning courses on offer means that learners of all abilities are catered for. The extensive enrichment programme and effective careers guidance supports students to make informed decisions about things ranging from sexual health to careers.
- Teaching is good. Changes in the leadership of the English department, and closer monitoring in the mathematics department, have contributed to improvements in the quality of teaching and ensured that more students achieve a GCSE grade C in English and mathematics by the time they leave the sixth form. However, teachers do not always set work for the most-able students that challenge them to achieve the highest A-level grades.
- Students on vocational courses do not have enough opportunities to improve their writing skills by writing at length.
- The behaviour and safety of students is good. Leaders ensure that students attend regularly and punctually. Safeguarding procedures keep sixth formers safe; ensuring that they fully appreciate the hazards posed by social networking sites and understand the dangers of online exploitation. Sixth formers are excellent role models. The most-able sixth formers provide good mentoring for younger students. They are effective in leading English and mathematics master classes in the feeder schools.
- There are no marked differences in the attainment and progress of different groups of learners. Current information shows that all groups of students are on track to make good progress in 2015 to continue an upward trend of attainment.

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.
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School details

Unique reference number	136044
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	461643

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	2250
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	396
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Arnold
Principal	Wayne Birks
Date of previous school inspection	02 May 2012
Telephone number	01529 302487
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