

Spalding Grammar School

Priory Road, Spalding, Lincolnshire PE11 2XH

Inspection dates 5–6 November 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new headmaster has had a significant effect on raising teachers' and pupils' expectations. He has swiftly restored the drive to ensure that every pupil must achieve their best.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers use effective questioning to secure pupil understanding. They readily share good practice to sharpen their own teaching skills.
- Pupils achieve well at this academy. Attainment at GCSE is above the national average, and progress in most subjects is at least good.
- Due to the academy's effective use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, the gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers at Key Stage 3 and GCSE in English and mathematics have closed rapidly.
- Subject leaders rigorously check the quality of teaching and use assessment information to identify pupils that are falling behind.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are proud of their academy and demonstrate exemplary behaviour.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are well-developed. The academy offers a wide range of enrichment activities which help prepare pupils to be good citizens.
- The academy's tutoring system enables older pupils to act as good role models for younger pupils.
- Governors possess a precise understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for improvement. They challenge and support senior leaders.
- The academy supports pupils well in preparing them for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Teachers and leaders provide effective support to sixth form pupils as they complete their studies.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils with weak literacy skills do not always receive the support they require to improve their writing skills.
- Although improving, outcomes for pupils in sixth form are not yet outstanding as some teaching does not take into account the needs of all learners.
- The most-able pupils do not achieve as well as they should, particularly in English.
- Leaders do not have a strategic overview of the performance of groups of pupils to ensure that the most-able pupils and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve as well as they should.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop a timely and strategic whole-academy oversight of performance information in order that leaders are able to ensure that:
 - the most-able pupils achieve the highest possible outcomes across all subjects, with particular focus on English
 - all teachers use the information concerning the individual needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to ensure that they all make as much progress as possible.
- Further increase the rate of progress in sixth form by embedding the recent developments to improve pupils' outcomes.
- Develop a cohesive whole-academy approach to supporting pupils with weak literacy skills to improve their writing and communication.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- In a short time the headmaster has developed a very precise understanding of the academy's strengths and the areas of improvement. He has been quick to challenge the expectations of staff and pupils and has successfully established a clear priority that all pupils should achieve the highest possible outcomes. Pupils and staff are becoming increasingly aspirational as a result.
- Senior leaders work effectively with subject leaders to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They offer challenge to ensure that pupil outcomes are high and provide targeted support where they identify underperformance in a subject area. Senior leaders, for example, have worked closely with the subject leaders of English to sharpen the quality of assessment of pupils' work to ensure that it is more accurate. As a consequence, there has been an improvement in the performance of pupils in this subject.
- Subject leaders are well equipped to carry out their duties. They work collaboratively with each other and with teachers in order to share good practice and learn from each other. New subject leaders are mentored by more experienced subject leaders to ensure that they rapidly develop their leadership skills. As a result, there is a sharp focus amongst subject leaders on the quality of teaching and its impact upon pupil outcomes.
- The academy uses additional funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively. Senior leaders work with disadvantaged pupils to establish the most effective strategies to support them. Senior leaders and governors carefully monitor the impact of these strategies. They make necessary alterations where strategies are identified as having limited impact. As a consequence, the gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers at Key Stage 3 and GCSE in English and mathematics have closed rapidly.
- Senior leaders manage teachers' performance effectively. Teachers set targets that are related to pupil outcomes and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, teachers are more focused on ensuring that pupils achieve the best possible outcomes.
- Staff training is focused closely on staff development needs and academy priorities. There are increasing opportunities for staff to share good practice with each other and those from neighbouring secondary schools. This open and collaborative approach to training is ensuring that there is a sharp and consistent focus on improving the quality of teaching.
- The academy's curriculum provides pupils with a broad and balanced range of subjects and wider enrichment activities which prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education, training or employment. The curriculum is enhanced by the academy's use of 'Flexydays' (occasions when pupils consider issues relating to the world around them) and a wide range of enrichment activities. These provide pupils with opportunities to develop their personal, social and employability skills.
- Effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables pupils to broaden their understanding of the world around them and prepare them for life in modern Britain. Trips abroad and displays around the academy celebrating history, literature and art provide pupils with effective opportunities to develop a good understanding of the impact of different cultural influences. Frequent consideration of current topical issues in form time and regular whole-academy assemblies allow pupils to deepen their understanding of such British values as democracy and freedom of speech.
- Leaders do not ensure that all teachers consistently act upon information about disabled pupils and those with special educational needs when planning activities. As a consequence, these pupils do not always receive effective support to secure their knowledge, understanding and skills. On these occasions, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not always achieve as well as they should.
- Academy leaders do not have a regular or precise enough oversight of the achievement of pupils across all years and in all subjects. As a consequence, until recently, the progress made by the most-able pupils has not been rapid enough. Since taking up the post, the headmaster has implemented changes to overcome this weakness. However, this change is too recent to have had a sustained impact.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have a clear understanding of their role in ensuring that the academy's provision is effective. They are sharply focused on providing every pupil with the opportunity to achieve their best. As a consequence, governors challenge senior leaders robustly where required, and provide effective support where appropriate.

- Governors have an accurate understanding of the academy’s strengths and areas for improvement. They are tenacious in ensuring that they receive accurate and timely information about the academy’s performance. This information enables governors to ensure that they can make a secure evaluation of the impact of the academy’s work. Governors, for example, have requested more frequent information regarding how the academy spends its pupil premium allocation. They have also provided challenge to ensure that information about pupil achievement is robust.
- Governors work hard to ensure that they are fully skilled to be effective in their role. They have completed an audit of their own collective skills and have developed a governor-focused improvement plan. Governors also complete review days where they discuss issues about the academy’s performance and meet with staff and pupils to ascertain their views.
- Governors understand the importance of ensuring that pupils are safe and recognise the role they play in ensuring this. They are fully aware of the actions they must undertake where there are safeguarding concerns.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders work closely with external agencies and parents to ensure that all pupils are supported and feel safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers provide effective learning opportunities and engage well with pupils. As a result, pupils absorb new ideas and are keen to learn.
- Teachers possess good subject knowledge which they use effectively to pose challenging questions and clarify misconceptions. This allows pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Teachers encourage pupils to adopt positive attitudes to their learning. In a physical education lesson, for example, pupils were encouraged to use creative approaches to review their learning, including using acrostic poems which contain letters in each line which spell out a key word or phrase. Art teachers display pupils’ work from across all years to demonstrate how pupils can develop their own work. As a consequence, pupils have a clear focus on how to improve their work.
- Teachers regularly set appropriate homework. A very large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, believe that pupils receive homework which is appropriate to their age. As a result, pupils have regular opportunities to develop further the learning achieved in lessons.
- Teachers provide pupils with appropriate written and verbal feedback which focuses on how pupils can improve their work. Teachers give pupils opportunities to reflect upon this feedback and consider how to improve their work. Pupils that inspectors met were clear that the feedback they receive allows them to learn from their mistakes and improve their understanding.
- Pupils with low levels of literacy are not supported consistently well. Senior leaders have put strategies into place to develop pupils’ literacy skills. These include introducing a ‘Reading Thursday’ (a day where pupils are expected to read books during form time), providing targeted support for pupils whose literacy skills are weak and displaying information on the use of punctuation. In some lessons, pupils are encouraged to use subject-specific language in their verbal and written responses, which enables them to develop their communication skills further. However, such practice is not consistent across all subjects. Consequently, there are occasions where pupils’ progress is restricted as a result of their weaker literacy skills.
- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of their pupils. Most teachers plan activities that meet the needs of their learners and stretch and challenge the most able. However, there is inconsistency across subjects and teachers. As a consequence, the most-able pupils do not always make as much progress in their learning as they could.
- Teachers do not always provide as much support as they could to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. There is variability in the way teachers use information about these pupils. As a consequence, not all disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive the necessary targeted support or appropriate activities in lessons that would secure their rapid progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils spoken to said that they feel safe at the academy. They are confident that, should they share a concern with a member of staff, they will be taken seriously and the issue will be resolved.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their child felt safe at the academy.
- Pupils are well informed about how to stay safe online, through their computing lessons, assemblies and 'Flexydays'.
- All forms of bullying, including cyber bullying and racist bullying, are rare. Those pupils spoken to said that on the rare occasions bullying does occur, staff deal with such incidents both swiftly and effectively.
- The academy provides extensive opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the world they live in and to widen their experiences beyond their academic studies. For example, charity work is a strong feature of the academy, with pupils supporting a variety of charitable causes.
- Pupils have extensive opportunities to keep themselves healthy, including a range of sporting activities and counselling for pupils experiencing examination stress.
- The academy's system of vertical tutoring, where form groups include pupils from across all year groups, provides pupils with opportunities to act as role models and to take on positions of responsibility within the academy's pupil community. Older pupils are able to take on the role of pupil mentor to offer support to any pupils who are experiencing difficulties, either in their studies or in their well-being.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education as a result of the effective careers guidance they receive. Pupils have a clear understanding of all of the options which are available for them at the end of Year 11 and Year 13.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are polite and well-mannered and demonstrate exemplary conduct. They wear their uniform with pride and move around the academy site in a calm and orderly fashion.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. In lessons, they demonstrate an eagerness and curiosity to learn and exhibit positive and respectful behaviour to their peers and to their teachers. Inspectors did not see any low-level disruption. Relationships between pupils and other adults are extremely positive.
- Pupils' attendance is improving and is above average. This is a result of rigorous monitoring of attendance and the timely follow-up of any concerns by Heads of House. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent is also decreasing rapidly.
- Pupils are punctual both to school and to lessons and arrive ready to learn. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding.
- All staff who responded to the staff questionnaire agreed that behaviour is good and is managed well.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Outcomes for pupils in Year 11 are very high. The proportions of pupils attaining five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, in 2015 was well above national average. The academy has seen an improvement in this attainment over the past three years.
- Pupils make good progress, particularly in mathematics, science and physical education. This is as a result of high-quality teaching and the close monitoring of pupils' progress against their target grades and their individual starting points.
- The gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers nationally at Key Stage 3 and in GCSE English and mathematics have closed rapidly. Indeed, in mathematics, disadvantaged pupils make more progress than their peers nationally across all years. All disadvantaged pupils in 2015 attained five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics. This marked a significant improvement on the previous academic year and was a direct consequence of the effective support which disadvantaged pupils received.
- The proportions of pupils making or exceeding the progress expected of them in mathematics in 2015 were well above the national figures for 2014. The proportion of pupils making the progress expected of

them in English was above the national figure for 2014. A very large majority of parents who responded to Parent View expressed the view that their child made good progress at the academy.

- The academy prepares its pupils well for the next stage in their education, training or employment. A large majority of pupils stay on in the academy's sixth form. The remainder either attend other local providers of further education or take up apprenticeship placements. Very few pupils do not continue to further education, training or employment. The academy closely monitors pupils' destinations at the end of Year 11.
- The achievement of the most-able pupils is good. In the last academic year, there has been an improvement in the achievement of the most-able pupils. However, these pupils are not sufficiently challenged in their lessons at all times, which can slow down the progress they make.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades at GCSE in English in 2015 was too low. Senior leaders have worked closely with subject leaders in English to improve these outcomes. This work is starting to result in improved pupil progress, particularly at Key Stage 3 and in Year 10.
- The progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is improving, with more pupils making good progress. However, this improvement is inconsistent, due to the fact that not all teachers plan activities which meet the needs of these pupils.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Senior leaders have taken effective action to improve pupil outcomes in sixth form. Pupils' achievement at A level is broadly in line with the national average, although in 2015 fewer pupils achieved the highest grades than their peers nationally. Senior leaders have recognised this underperformance, however, and have put strategies into place to support pupils in completing their studies. As a consequence of these strategies, Year 12 pupils' achievement in 2015 was good.
- The English and mathematical skills of those pupils who progress to the sixth form are well developed.
- The headmaster has sensibly widened the leader of sixth form's role to include monitoring the achievement of pupils. As a consequence, the leader of sixth form is able to identify swiftly those pupils who are falling behind and provide the appropriate support. Pupils spoke highly of the extensive support which they have received while in the sixth form.
- Sixth formers say they feel safe. Inspectors agree with this point of view.
- Sixth form pupils' behaviour is good. They conduct themselves around the academy site in a professional manner and are dressed smartly.
- Pupils in the sixth form have a variety of appropriate opportunities to take on leadership roles. The vertical tutoring system provides sixth form pupils with opportunities to act as role models for younger pupils. Sixth form pupils actively contribute to the pupil community through their involvement in the pupil council and in the academy's six houses.
- Senior leaders have put into place an effective attendance strategy to improve the attendance of sixth form pupils. As a consequence, there has been an improvement in the attendance of sixth form pupils during the past two academic years.
- The quality of advice and guidance which pupils receive is good. As a consequence, the retention rates from Year 12 into Year 13 have improved. Form tutors and the leader of sixth form provide close support for those pupils who choose to leave at the end of Year 12. Those pupils all move on to more appropriate further education courses, training or employment.
- Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop their employability skills and explore their career choices through undertaking work experience and voluntary work. The academy closely supports and monitors pupils in their applications for these opportunities to ensure that pupils' applications are appropriate to their intended career choice.
- Pupils receive effective advice and guidance in preparation for their next steps after sixth form. Pupils receive information about the different pathways available to them. They receive valuable support in making applications to university, and are provided with information about finance. The leader of sixth form extends this support to pupils' parents, in recognition of the fact that some sixth formers are the first from their family to go to university.
- The leader of sixth form and the academy's form tutors closely monitor the destinations of those few pupils who do not move into higher education, apprenticeships or employment at the end of sixth form. They provide timely and effective support where it is appropriate.

- Pupils are provided with appropriate opportunities to consider life in modern Britain. The academy has led trips to religious places of worship and has provided a prayer room for Muslim pupils.
- The quality of teaching in sixth form is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge, use high-quality questioning to check pupils' understanding and plan activities which are sharply focused on developing examination skills. However, teachers do not always fully meet the needs of their pupils. This is partly due to the fact that pupils' target grades are not set rapidly enough. As a consequence, some pupils do not achieve as highly as they could.

School details

Unique reference number	139304
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10007588

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	985
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	277
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Bennett
Headteacher	Steven Wilkinson
Telephone number	01775 765800
Website	www.spaldinggrammar.lincs.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@spaldinggrammar.lincs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 December 2011

Information about this school

- Spalding Grammar School is an average-sized secondary school with a large sixth form.
- Since the last inspection, Spalding Grammar School has converted to an academy.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and, therefore, supported by the pupil premium is lower than average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is lower than the national average.
- The current headmaster took up post in September 2015.
- The academy does not make use of off-site training venues for pupils in Key Stage 3 or 4. The academy does have links with local employers to support sixth form pupils in their applications to complete work experience.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons, of which eight were sixth form lessons. The lead inspector conducted two joint lesson observations with the headmaster. Inspectors also observed an assembly.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and subject leaders. Inspectors met with senior leaders responsible for pupil achievement, teaching and learning, curriculum, behaviour and attendance, pupil premium, safeguarding and the sixth form. Inspectors also met with a range of subject leaders and the coordinator for pupils with special educational needs. The lead inspector met with five governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors spoke formally with groups of pupils including representatives of the pupil council. They also observed pupils' behaviour between lessons, at breaktime and at lunchtime, and took these opportunities to speak further with pupils.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation, including the school's own evaluation of how it is doing and information relating to pupils' achievement. Inspectors checked the academy's records relating to the monitoring of behaviour, attendance, exclusions and the safeguarding of pupils. Inspectors considered records of governors' meetings and systems used to manage staff performance.
- Inspectors considered the view of 94 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors took into account the views of the 15 members of staff who responded to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Simon Hollingsworth, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Harkireet Sohel	Ofsted inspector
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Julia Wright	Her Majesty's Inspector

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