

South Axholme Academy

Burnham Road, Epworth, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN9 1BY

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal and associate principal are relentless in their commitment and efforts to improve pupils' progress. All leaders set very high expectations for pupils' behaviour and achievement. Improvements have been rapid in recent years.
- As a result, most pupils across the school, in most subject areas, are making consistently strong progress from their starting points.
- Governors are very knowledgeable and provide highly effective challenge to senior and middle leaders. They are very involved in monitoring the school's work.
- Leaders have taken decisive and successful action in reviewing leadership and management responsibilities and teaching and learning strategies to improve the progress made by disadvantaged pupils.
- The newly formed sixth form is good and has the capacity to improve further. Teaching is effective overall and leaders are increasingly improving students' experiences. The first set of results lay a strong foundation for further improvement. Leaders are taking action to support students to achieve the top grades and to improve the retention rates further.
- The school's systems for assessing pupils' progress are very effective. They show teachers, pupils, parents and carers how well pupils are doing in each subject and what they need to do next.
- Staff are very supportive of the changes brought about by senior leaders and staff morale is high. Staff are proud of the way in which the school has improved and are ambitious for it to improve further.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive. There is a strong culture of support in the school. Pupils behave very well. They show positive attitudes to learning and conduct themselves expertly around the academy.
- Leaders have taken highly effective actions to improve attendance. Rates for all pupils have improved dramatically and are now above average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved significantly.
- Teaching is strong in the majority of subjects, and rapidly improving the remaining subjects. This is as a result of leaders' highly effective training and targeted support to all teachers. Teachers usually provide sufficient challenge to the most able pupils. However, some inconsistencies still exist between subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Iron out the remaining inconsistencies in teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - continuing to reduce in-school variation in the quality of teaching
 - sharing the good and outstanding practice that exists in planning learning activities that challenge the most able pupils.

- Further improve the sixth-form provision, by:
 - ensuring that study programmes for each student are planned and managed so that they build on each student's prior attainment to help them achieve their best.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The principal and associate principal have an excellent, clear and focused vision about what is required to make the improvements needed. They are relentless in their work and show commitment, ambition and passion. As a result of exceptional leadership and management, the school has seen significant and sustained improvements in the progress, attendance and behaviour of the pupils.
- Leaders are highly evaluative and they have systematically and successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. They set very high expectations of themselves, staff and pupils. Leaders have established a highly positive and ambitious climate in which pupils thrive and staff develop their skills successfully.
- Leaders and governors have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They regularly analyse pupils' progress in each subject and accurately identify pupils who need extra support. For example, the targeted and carefully planned support for disadvantaged pupils has resulted in the significant improvement of the progress these pupils make and in their attendance rates. Leaders have used the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils successfully.
- Meticulously planned and targeted use of additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, has brought about a significant improvement in progress and attendance for these pupils. Consequently, the additional SEN funding is also used to very good effect.
- Leaders are very detailed in their analysis of the effect of their actions on all aspects of the school's work. They regularly review the curriculum and check the progress of current pupils with middle leaders. Middle leaders have a very positive influence through monitoring the progress of pupils and promoting high aspirations to pupils and staff. Middle leaders monitor the effectiveness of teachers and teaching assistants very well to ensure the continuous development of their departments. As a result, outcomes for pupils are improving significantly.
- Leaders have introduced a range of curriculum models, such as the secondary-ready and non-secondary-ready pathways in Year 7 and mini options in Year 7 and Year 8 to ensure better preparation for GCSE courses in response to pupils' opinions. The breadth of the curriculum is strongly supported by a range of out-of-school activities including trips and visits, concerts, football tours and a sports ambassador's programme. There is strong take-up of extra-curricular activities by pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Leaders have taken appropriate, decisive and very effective actions to eradicate weak teaching. As a result of these actions, there have been significant staff changes over the last three years, with a successful focus on the recruitment of high-quality staff. Consequently, outcomes for pupils have improved year on year.
- Leaders use performance management extremely well to ensure that teachers focus on improving the progress for all pupils. Teachers are clear about leaders' expectations, are aware of the school's priorities and work hard to achieve their performance targets.
- Pupils have various opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural

understanding through the excellent South Axholme mindset programme. The taught curriculum, together with a planned programme of themed assemblies, ensures that all pupils learn about world issues, develop a strong social conscience and respect the differences between religions and cultures.

Governance of the school

- Governance is highly effective. The local governing body comprises highly skilled and experienced governors who provide relentless support and challenge to school leaders, including middle leaders. They have a highly accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors receive succinct and accurate information and have correctly prioritised the main areas for improvement.
- Governors demonstrate outstanding commitment to the school and share the vision and high aspirations of the trust and the principal. They visit the school regularly, both formally and informally. They know the school very well and carry out their statutory duties diligently.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. The leaders and managers responsible for safeguarding carry out their roles well and keep pupils safe. Clear and appropriate measures are in place to ensure that leaders check the suitability of staff. School evidence also shows that when they need to, leaders take comprehensive action, involving external agencies as appropriate, to help ensure timely and effective support for vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Leaders ensure that all staff have appropriate training, for example in awareness of radicalisation, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. Staff know what to do should they have a safeguarding concern about a pupil.
- A more experienced senior leader is expertly supporting the recently appointed designated safeguarding lead. The new leader acts swiftly on all concerns.
- Pupils feel safe, and the vast majority of parents who made their views known believe that their children are safe at school. Pupils are taught how to stay safe. Parents also commented positively on the dedication of staff and the support they provide to the pupils.
- A few pupils study at the Coritani Academy and Haxey Study Centre as part of their provision. School leaders are in regular contact to check on their progress, attendance and welfare.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good in many subjects. Teachers' strong subject knowledge, effective planning and probing questioning are identifying misconceptions and deepening pupils' knowledge and understanding well.
- Most teachers have high expectations of their pupils, including the disadvantaged and the most able pupils, and set challenging activities in lessons. For example, in a Year 9

English lesson inspectors observed pupils completing an analysis of textual extracts where there was a high level of challenge and students were encouraged to 'dig deep'. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, inspectors observed similar high levels of challenge and effective questioning which led to effective learning.

- The school's arrangements for assessing pupils' progress are very effective. All teachers check routinely on pupils' learning and progress. In the vast majority of pupils' books, teachers' feedback is in line with the school's policy. This ensures that pupils know how to improve their work. Teachers often check that pupils can apply these improvements so that pupils have a clearer understanding as a result. Consequently, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make strong progress.
- Leaders have recently restructured the roles of teaching assistants. Leaders have introduced specialist teaching assistants for English, mathematics, science and humanities. Where the staff have the relevant subject knowledge, they demonstrate effective support of pupils' progress.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and also meet frequently with the special educational needs coordinator to review the support of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils are supported well and make good progress.
- Where teaching is less effective, for example in modern foreign languages, teachers set activities which lack sufficient challenge. Leaders are aware of this and are taking effective action to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better in every subject.
- There is a developing culture of reading across the school. The member of staff responsible for reading is very enthusiastic. They have introduced clear systems following a thorough review in the 2016/17 academic year and also recognise the difficulty in promoting reading successfully given the current limitations of resources, such as the lack of a school library.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Through the school's excellent South Axholme mindset programme, pupils learn about British values and develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Inspectors observed a highly effective assembly on global awareness taught to Year 7 pupils and discussions about democracy and careers by Year 11 pupils during form time.
- Pupils say that bullying is very rare. When it does happen, teachers deal with it swiftly. Inspectors confirmed this from scrutinising school documentation. Parents and pupils value the support of teachers and how they help pupils settle into school life, especially for the new Year 7 pupils.
- Leaders are extremely effective in ensuring that the welfare of the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision is a high priority. There is excellent communication between school staff and the providers. As a result, these pupils follow

a personalised curriculum that is appropriate to their needs, with much improved progress, behaviour and attendance.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are polite, friendly and behave extremely well around the school. During break and lunchtime, they socialise in a calm way and they interact very well with each other and staff. Pupils move around school from lesson to lesson quickly, calmly and purposefully.
- Disruption to learning is rare. When it does occasionally happen, teachers apply the school discipline policy consistently and deal with situations swiftly and effectively.
- Leaders' highly effective actions have resulted in a significant reduction in the number of pupils subject to fixed-period exclusion and the number of internal-isolation incidents. Fixed-period exclusions are now very low. Staff are highly effective in supporting all pupils to maintain their excellent behaviour and to remove any remaining barriers to learning.
- Persistent absence rates are also reducing overall and especially for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the last inspection, outcomes have continued to improve strongly, as has the overall progress of pupils in the school. Observations of learning, reviews of pupils' work books and school assessment information show that the majority of pupils are making good progress in their learning across different year groups and groups of pupils. Provisional progress information for 2017 supports this.
- School leaders took very effective action, in developing teaching and learning strategies, to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. They have targeted the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils to good effect. The progress of the disadvantaged pupils has improved significantly in English, mathematics and English Baccalaureate subjects.
- The attainment of other pupils in English language and English literature is also strong. Published performance tables indicate that outcomes in these areas were above the national average in 2016. Provisional information indicates that outcomes for 2017 have improved further.
- Strong teaching in mathematics has led to pupils, including the disadvantaged pupils, making very strong progress last year. Published and school information shows significant improvement in the number of pupils achieving both a grade four and a grade five in mathematics.
- Performance in science has continued to improve strongly year on year. Provisional 2017 examination information indicates that outcomes in biology, chemistry and physics have improved considerably from the previous year.
- Staff monitor closely the small group of pupils who attend alternative provision off-site. The activities that the pupils take part in are appropriate for their abilities and interests. The qualifications that pupils gain, for example in animal care, offer a clear progression

through to apprenticeships and pupils' chosen career options.

- School information indicates that performance in art, resistant materials and music in 2017 was less strong and the attainment of pupils in these subjects remained significantly lower than national averages. Outcomes in engineering have improved over the past year and now they are broadly in line with the national average. Outcomes in French declined compared to 2016 but they are broadly in line with the national average. School leaders are already taking action to bring about the required improvements, including changes in staffing and targeted professional development opportunities. This variation in outcomes for some subjects, along with the variations observed during visits to classrooms and those seen in inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work, clearly evidence why outcomes are not yet outstanding.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The school's newly formed sixth form provides an inclusive and aspirational education for its students. The newly appointed leader of the sixth form is very knowledgeable about the strengths and areas for improvement and has clear action plans in place to address weaker areas.
- The recruitment process of the first cohort of students was not as effective as leaders had hoped. As a result, only half the students in Year 12 continued studying into Year 13. Following these low retention rates, leaders took swift action to review the curriculum offer and recruitment process. This has resulted in an improved retention rates for the current Year 13 students. However, the full effect on this group of students' outcomes is too early to confirm.
- The quality of careers information, advice and guidance that students receive prior to joining the sixth form is improving. Current students follow appropriate personalised study programmes that enable them to move on to higher education, training or full-time employment after leaving the sixth form. The revised curriculum enables students to take a combination of academic and applied courses to suit their abilities and interests.
- Examination information shows that the outcomes of the school's first cohort of sixth-form students have laid a strong foundation for the future. In 2017, all 25 students achieved grades in the A* to E range in their academic A levels.
- Strong teaching means that students currently on roll are making good progress in their chosen courses. The school's assessment information shows that students in Year 13 are on course to achieve improved outcomes, in both academic and applied subjects, compared with last year. Inspection evidence supports this view.
- Leaders are continuing to develop the provision effectively. All students in the sixth form are supported well, including those who are disadvantaged. Teachers monitor students' performance closely and have regular meetings about progress, attendance, university applications and general well-being.
- Students now benefit from a range of enrichment activities, including access to relevant work-experience placements. The school has recently introduced cooking on a budget, online safety, alcohol safety, student finance and apprenticeships as part of the wider curriculum. Such work is broadening students' horizons and helping to

prepare them effectively for the world beyond the sixth form. Leaders acknowledge that there is still more work to do to ensure that study programmes for each student are planned and managed precisely. This is so that they build on each student's prior attainment briskly, to help them achieve the highest grades possible.

School details

Unique reference number	137742
Local authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10036530

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	844
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	55
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Colin Bagley
Principal	Sarah Thompson
Telephone number	01427 872121
Website	www.southaxholmeacademy.co.uk
Email address	sthompson@southaxholme-iet.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	30–31 January 2013

Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2016. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics set by the government by the end of Year 11.

- The school is part of Isle Education Trust and converted to an academy in 2010. In 2013, South Axholme became the lead school in the Isle Education Trust and was inspected as an 11 to 16 provider. In September 2015, the school opened its own sixth-form provision.
- South Axholme Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The percentage of the pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage, with a very small minority from other ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The principal is a local leader of education.
- The school uses Coritani Academy and Haxey Study Centre for alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- In 2013, the school had a section 5 inspection as an 11 to 16 provider and was judged good. Since then, the school has added a new key stage post-16. Consequently, this inspection was conducted as a section 5 inspection.
- Inspectors visited parts of 44 lessons across most subject areas. Many of these visits took place with senior leaders. During visits to classrooms, inspectors looked in pupils' workbooks and questioned pupils about their learning.
- Discussions took place with the principal, associate principal, other senior leaders, most subject leaders and a number of teachers. Inspectors also held discussions with members of the wider body of staff and with leaders from the academy's alternative provision. Discussions also took place with a representative of the trust and members of the local governing board, including the chair of the governing body and the chair of directors of the trust.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils from all year groups, including sixth-form students, about what it is like to be a young person at the school. Inspectors also listened to Year 8 pupils read.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school, including between lessons, at breaktimes and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors took into account 71 free-text responses from parents to the online survey, Parent View. They analysed 42 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors examined records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors also scrutinised documents, including school development plans, governing body minutes, external reviews, performance management records and information about pupils' achievement.

Inspection team

Dimitris Spiliotis, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Judith Gooding	Ofsted Inspector
Marianne Young	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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