

John Smeaton Academy

Smeaton Approach, Barwick Road, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS15 8TA

Inspection dates

15 to 16 January 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- In the past, leadership and governance has failed to bring about the necessary improvement. The school's performance has declined since the previous inspection. In 2018, Year 11 pupils' progress was significantly below the provisional national averages.
- Although leadership and governance have now been strengthened, the changes made by the new leadership team have not had time to impact fully on pupils' achievement.
- The majority of pupils behave well. However, attendance is low and too many pupils exhibit poor behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Recent improvements to systems to manage the performance of teachers have not had time to impact fully on pupils' achievement.
- Historically, a sizeable minority of pupils were educated off-site. New leaders have made every effort to reintegrate these pupils, as smoothly as possible, into school life on-site. However, there is a legacy of underachievement for this cohort of pupils.
- Since January 2018, there has been considerable staff turbulence. Leaders have tried to minimise the impact of this. However, there has been a negative effect on teaching and learning during this time.
- Some middle leaders' skills, to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, need further development.
- Assessment arrangements in the provision for pupils with complex learning difficulties are not fit for purpose.

The school has the following strengths

- The new senior leaders have an ambitious vision for the school. They have an accurate view of the school's weaknesses and are taking the appropriate actions to make the improvements urgently required. They are increasingly well supported by recently appointed senior and middle leaders.
- Arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. Pupils feel safe and are kept safe.
- The new school improvement board has a clear understanding of the school's performance. This, with appropriate support and challenge from the trust, is helping them to support and challenge the school's leaders more effectively.
- Changes in the sixth form have brought improvements more quickly and more consistently than in key stages 3 and 4.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, so that it is at least consistently good across all subjects and leads to improved outcomes, by:
 - giving high-quality support to the considerable number of new members of staff, particularly those new to the profession
 - continuing to focus on professional development so that all teachers enable pupils to make good or better progress
 - ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those with the most complex needs, improve rapidly
 - developing the skills of teachers, including in the sixth form, to consolidate and deepen students' learning.
- Urgently improve the behaviour of a sizeable minority of pupils, ensuring that:
 - there is a sustained improvement in pupils' attendance
 - there is a further reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders, including governors, so that they can secure rapid and sustained improvement to teaching and outcomes for pupils by:
 - continuing to develop the skills of middle leaders so that all use the information from monitoring consistently to improve teaching, learning and assessment in their subjects
 - ensuring that the assessment arrangements for pupils in the complex learning difficulty provision are fit for purpose.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have not focused sufficiently on securing good progress for pupils.
- Prior to January 2018, leaders were too generous in their evaluation of the school's performance. Senior and middle leaders did not check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress effectively enough. Until more recently, leaders have not had sufficiently high expectations or taken swift enough action to eradicate poor teaching and weak outcomes.
- Attendance is well below the national average. The number of fixed-term exclusions is above the national average. Current leaders, who are new to the school since January 2018, have put strategies in place to address these weaknesses. However, there has not been time for these strategies to make a real difference.
- Historically, leaders' use of the additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils has not been effective. Current leaders were quick to see this. They are now taking a much more robust and analytical approach and the changes made are starting to have some impact on the progress of some disadvantaged pupils. However, the new strategies have not had time to show any improvement in the overall attendance of this group of pupils.
- The new head of school and the executive principal have a clear and ambitious vision for rapid and sustained improvement. They are well supported by the restructured senior and extended leadership team and a developing team of middle leaders.
- Current leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are tackling the weaknesses identified in a systematic way. They have introduced more rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and now use assessment information more effectively. Leaders use regular meetings with middle leaders to pinpoint underachievement and plan support and intervention for individual pupils.
- Leaders have introduced a more rigorous assessment system at both key stage 3 and 4. This includes more regular testing and external checking of the accuracy of how these assessments are marked. This approach is still developing, but it is already making a difference. More reliable information is enabling leaders to pinpoint more accurately which pupils are falling behind.
- The new leadership team quickly identified that weaknesses in the curriculum were a major contributor to pupils' underachievement. This is exemplified by the 2018 examination results. They reviewed the curriculum and implemented the changes in September 2018. Leaders are committed to keeping the broad, balanced curriculum, including the performing and visual arts. In planning the curriculum, leaders have also made sure that they fulfil their responsibility to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Since January 2018, the trust has been providing more effective support and challenge. The support is wide-ranging, from senior leadership to the attendance team. Middle leaders have appreciated the subject-based support. The trust has ensured improvements in governance. It has a well-structured programme in place to ensure

that there is appropriate challenge for school leaders.

- Parental views on the effectiveness of leadership and management are mixed. A number of parents commented on the positive changes that have taken place since January 2018 and on the supportive pastoral care systems that are in place. Other parents are concerned about the quality of teaching and behaviour. The most frequent issue raised is the lack of continuity for pupils with so many changes of teacher.
- Staff views are also mixed. Inspectors met many staff who had clearly embraced the changes since September 2018, but the staff survey revealed that a sizeable minority of staff had found it more difficult to adapt to the many recent changes. Where staff were less positive, the behaviour of pupils was the main concern.
- Prior to January 2018, leaders had not used funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. The experienced special educational needs coordinator, empowered by the new leadership team, has put into place more rigorous systems to check the progress of pupils with SEND. However, there has not been sufficient time for these changes to have sustained impact.
- The curriculum and assessment arrangements for pupils in the complex learning difficulty provision are weak. There are appropriate access arrangements to GCSE courses for some pupils, and some pupils make strong progress. However, the curriculum for most pupils is not focused sharply enough on preparation for independence.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not been diligent enough over time in holding leaders to account for pupils' underachievement and the performance of staff. The new leadership team were quick to see this, and the trust replaced the previous governing body with a new school improvement board in January 2018.
- Members of this new body have a realistic picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know that the 2018 GCSE results were not good enough, particularly for disadvantaged and middle-ability pupils. Like school leaders, they have learned lessons from these poor results and have ambitious targets for the future.
- Minutes of meetings since the change of governance show clearly the increased level of challenge for school leaders. Members of the new group have the skills, knowledge and confidence to ask the necessary, probing questions.
- The chair of the school improvement board has experience in safeguarding matters and, as the link with leaders, she meets regularly with them to discuss safeguarding. The designated safeguarding leader also reports to the board at each meeting. As a result, the school improvement board monitors safeguarding effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a clear message from the very top that the safety of children is of paramount importance. This area of the school's work is well led. Staff have a clear understanding of procedures because they have regular training. They look out for pupils who may be

at risk or vulnerable.

- Leaders work effectively with local agencies to support vulnerable pupils and their families. Record-keeping shows that referrals are followed up in a robust manner and leaders are not afraid to challenge external agencies if they are not satisfied with the response to any case.
- Leaders make appropriate checks on adults who are working in the school. Detailed records of these checks are maintained.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep safe and the risks which might affect them. They feel safe and are confident that they can talk to a member of staff if they have a problem. Furthermore, they have trust in staff to resolve the issues raised with them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching over time has failed to meet the varying needs of pupils. As a result, progress has been weak, particularly for key groups, such as disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with average prior attainment. Current leaders were quick to see this and have put in place more rigorous systems to check the progress of pupils and the quality of teaching more effectively.
- While there are signs that the quality of teaching is beginning to improve, it remains extremely variable across and within subjects. Recent approaches to improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are still in their early stages.
- Across subjects, not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Too often, planning does not take account of pupils' starting points. As a result, some of the work is not challenging enough for some pupils and too difficult for others.
- Middle leaders are now monitoring the progress of pupils more effectively and this is beginning to lead to more effective teaching in English, mathematics and science. However, the improvements are not consistent across the English faculty. As a result, some groups of pupils are still making insufficient progress in this key subject. There is a more convincing picture of improvement in mathematics and science, but the new policies are not firmly embedded, and therefore inconsistencies remain.
- A scrutiny of pupils' workbooks in humanities shows improvements in both history and geography. This is clearer in geography where staffing has been more stable. The staffing issues in history have had a negative impact on the progress of some pupils, particularly in key stage 3.
- Some teachers have high expectations and explain clearly what they want pupils to learn. In a music lesson, for example, the teacher knew the class well, checked regularly the understanding of all pupils and structured the activity to meet their differing needs. The scrutiny of workbooks in English showed effective teaching in a Year 11 class. The teacher's expectations were both ambitious and clear and it was easy to see how the teaching enabled the pupils to make their writing more sophisticated. However, such qualities are not consistent features of the school's teaching.
- Pupils understand how the school is developing their reading skills. Pupils read with

confidence and have the techniques to help them overcome any difficulties they come across in their reading. They are also able to answer questions about the text to show their understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Leaders' work in this area has had a positive effect on the majority of pupils, but there is still a sizeable minority of pupils who do not display positive attitudes to their learning.
- Leaders have worked hard to establish an ethos of respect, trust and tolerance. Relationships among pupils, and between pupils and adults, are positive. Pupils wear their uniform smartly and are polite and welcoming to visitors. They are proud of their school and the learning environment. They treat the new building with respect.
- Pupils understand the different types of bullying and feel that school staff deal effectively with the few incidents which occur. The effective curriculum for personal development has ensured that pupils do not tolerate racism or homophobia.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. They appreciate the visible staff presence and the fact that staff, including senior leaders, are so approachable. There is always an adult they can talk to if they need support. They are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe online and in the community because of the work the school does to help them understand and respond to risks to their safety.
- Pupils appreciate the valuable advice they receive throughout the school to help them make good choices in their key stage 4 options and for what they do after GCSE. Because of this effective guidance, in 2018 the vast majority of pupils who left at the end Year 11 went on to appropriate further education, employment or training.
- There are close links with the off-site providers for those pupils who are still educated in settings away from the school site. Robust procedures are now in place to ensure that these pupils remain safe. There are also regular checks by school staff to ensure that pupils are making progress and to plan the next phase of their education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Although both pupils and staff can see the differences between the new and the old policy and understand the reasons for the change, leaders have not won over the hearts and minds of all pupils and all staff in relation to the new behaviour policy.
- A sizeable minority of pupils exhibit poor conduct both in classrooms and around school. Consequently, over time, exclusions have been high. Despite the efforts of leaders leading to some improvement, exclusions remain at a level significantly above the national average.

- For the last three years, pupils' attendance has been low. The new leadership team has a range of strategies in place, but attendance remains significantly below the national average.
- A number of pupils over time have been educated off-site at alternative provision. Since January 2018, leaders have worked hard to reintegrate as many of these pupils as possible back into the school. There have been successes, but the legacy of so many pupils being previously educated off-site is still presenting challenges. Some pupils have struggled to comply with the school rules on-site and many have found it difficult to catch up work they have missed.
- Most pupils in the school make a positive contribution to their learning and behave appropriately. They enjoy learning when they receive good teaching, and very positive relationships exist between these pupils and their teachers.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Over time, weak teaching has led to poor progress across a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and humanities.
- Progress overall for the Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2018 was significantly below average, and in the bottom 10% of schools nationally. Too many pupils did not make the progress that they should. Pupils made significantly less progress than their peers nationally with the same starting points, particularly in science.
- The 2018 GCSE results also show considerable differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. This underachievement was most acute in English and science, where the performance of disadvantaged pupils was in the bottom 10% of all schools nationally. Pupils with average prior attainment also made significantly weaker progress than their peers with similar starting points nationally, especially in English, science and humanities.
- Weak teaching over time, high numbers of pupils being educated off-site, high levels of absence, high rates of exclusion and ineffective use of the pupil premium funding to support learning and progress have all contributed to serious underachievement.
- The new leadership team's quick grasp of the weaknesses and the changes they have made are starting to have an impact. Progress of current pupils, particularly in key stage 4, is more rapid, but this improvement is from a low starting point.
- The English faculty has suffered more than most subject areas from the volatility in staffing since January 2018. There is more stable staffing now, but the varying quality of teaching within the English faculty is leading to big differences in the progress made by different groups. There are clear improvements in key stage 4, but the consequences of the staffing issues are still clear in key stage 3. Scrutiny of pupils' books showed that some pupils are still making poor progress because of the lack of consistently good-quality teaching.
- There are clear improvements in the progress of pupils in mathematics, and very recent new leadership in science is starting to have a positive impact. However, the progress made by pupils is still inconsistent in both subject areas.
- With the change in leadership in January 2018, leaders have put increased emphasis on the importance of improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils. This is starting

to have a positive impact. Across some subjects, disadvantaged pupils are beginning to make progress at least in line with their non-disadvantaged peers. However, this is not consistently the case in English.

- Over time leaders have not monitored the progress of pupils with SEND closely enough. It is only from September 2018 that appropriate checks have been put in place, and there is evidence of early improvement in the progress being made by pupils.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The new leadership team quickly recognised that, over time, provision and leadership in the sixth form had not been effective. They have taken prompt action to address these weaknesses. The new sixth-form leaders, in post from September 2018, have high expectations and work closely with senior leaders.
- Leaders are beginning to use the school's systems for checking the quality of teaching and assessment more rigorously in the sixth form. Similarly, the tracking of individual students' progress is now more rigorous. However, this has not made enough difference for the progress of current students overall to be consistently good.
- Leaders have stripped down the curriculum and created a small sixth-form based on level 3 courses. There are no students at present who need to resit GCSE English or mathematics. Every learner gained at least a good pass in both these subjects at the end of Year 11.
- Students' progress across a range of academic subjects has been below the national average for the last two years. Current tracking by leaders shows that, in some subjects, such as biology, mathematics and physics, students' progress at A-level is improving strongly. However, the rate of improvement is not consistent across all subjects. Scrutiny of students' workbooks shows evidence of some strong progress, but not in all subjects.
- Some teaching in the sixth form is very effective. Students benefit from positive relationships with teachers who know them well and have high expectations of them. However, this is not the case across all subjects and, in some subject areas, students are not challenged well enough.
- The proportion of students who leave the sixth-form during their programme of study has reduced significantly. This is due to the better advice, guidance and support that they now receive before choosing to study in the sixth form and the increased support they receive when they begin their courses.
- Students receive good careers advice and take part in a range of activities to prepare them for life beyond education and training. Those who choose to apply to go to university are well supported in their applications, and all are successful in securing a place. In 2018, every student progressed into appropriate education, employment or training, with an increased number going on to university.
- Students benefit from effective provision to develop their broader skills, including the opportunity to take part in work experience. This is a well-planned programme, and leaders ensure that there are placements to suit the needs of individual students' career aims.

- A real strength of the provision is the engagement with a wide range of outside programmes and activities to inspire and motivate students. Through these programmes and aspects of the tutorial programme, students successfully develop employability skills.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe online and they feel safe and secure in school. They said that they feel well supported by the teachers and tutors. They are attentive in lessons and contribute well in learning activities when given the opportunity to work with each other.
- Attendance is well above average. This is because leaders check that students are attending lessons and tutorials regularly and most students enjoy their chosen subjects.

School details

Unique reference number	139282
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	10059062

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	886
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	49
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Vicki Hall
Head of School	Claire Bailey
Telephone number	0113 8313 900
Website	www.johnsmeatonacademy.org.uk
Email address	enquiries@johnsmeatonacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 to 14 December 2016

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The school is part of United Learning Trust, whose trustees hold the ultimate responsibility for the governance of the school. Full details of the governance arrangements are available on the school's website.
- The governing body was disbanded in January 2018 and replaced by a United Learning school improvement board.
- The period after this change saw considerable staff changes with a third of the academy staff leaving.

- In June 2018 the headteacher retired and a new head of school was appointed.
- Most pupils are White British. The remaining pupils originate from a diverse range of minority ethnic heritages.
- Most pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils receiving support from the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of pupils receiving support for SEND is below average.
- There is provision for pupils with complex learning needs on-site (19 pupils on roll). As a result, the proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school uses several alternative providers to educate a small number of its pupils. These include: Pivot, Southways and the Medical Needs Teaching service.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 38 lessons across the school. Many of the observations in lessons were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the executive principal, the head of school, senior and subject leaders, the regional director of the trust board, the deputy regional director and the chair of the school improvement board.
- Inspectors spoke to teachers, including newly qualified teachers and recently qualified teachers, about their practice and pupils' learning.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work during lessons and separately with a group of subject leaders for English, mathematics, history, geography and science. Inspectors also scrutinised a selection of work from the sixth form.
- Inspectors spoke to representatives from the alternative education providers used by the school. Inspectors also visited the school's internal specialist provisions for more vulnerable pupils and those exhibiting behaviour contrary to the academy's policy.
- Inspectors held formal meetings with several different groups of pupils from across the academy. Inspectors also talked to many pupils in lessons, during social times and at the start and end of the school day.
- Inspectors listened to some pupils from Year 7 and Year 8 read and discussed their work with them.
- Inspectors examined wide-ranging evidence provided by the school, including self-evaluation and analysis of performance information, action plans, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding files, recruitment checks and minutes of governors' meetings.
- Inspectors considered the 86 responses from parents and carers who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. The views of the 49 members of staff who completed Ofsted's online staff survey were also considered.

Inspection team

David Pridding, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
George Gilmore	Ofsted Inspector
Mary Lanovy-Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Rogers	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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