

Spring Brook Academy

Dean Street, Failsworth, Oldham, Lancashire M35 0DQ

Inspection dates

18–19 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching throughout all key stages is inconsistent. Where teachers have planned effectively, pupils are being challenged and are thriving. However, this is not always the case, particularly for high-ability pupils.
- Assessment is not always used as effectively as it could be. As a result, some pupils are not being challenged to extend their learning.
- Pupils in key stage 4 do not attend school as regularly as they should do. Leaders do not have a clear picture of whole-school attendance so that improvements can be measured over time and between different groups.
- There have been clear improvements in pupils' behaviour. However, in the upper school, leaders have continued to allow pupils to smoke outside the school gates under staff supervision.
- The current key stage 4 curriculum does not challenge or extend the learning of the more able pupils. A new curriculum is ready to be implemented in September for the lower school and the key stage 4 provision.
- Leaders collate a lot of information and data around school performance. However, this is not always detailed and sharp enough so that governors and leaders can challenge effectively or measure any impact on school improvement.
- The school has been through a lot of changes. Leaders are now ready to take ownership of and have accountability for school improvement.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. However, leaders have sometimes failed to update records to ensure that actions and outcomes have been recorded accurately.

The school has the following strengths

- The support and expertise provided by the New Bridge Multi-Academy Trust has had a very positive impact. The school now has the firm foundations for future growth and improvement.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare is strong. From often very low starting points, pupils make good progress. This is because they receive full support, guidance and excellent care from the dedicated staff team.
- Outcomes for pupils across the school are good.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good across all key stages of the school by ensuring that all teachers:
 - plan effectively to challenge pupils so that they maintain their focus on their learning throughout the lesson
 - have high expectations of what each pupil can achieve
 - use assessment to plan next steps in learning.
- Improve behaviour by:
 - taking action to stop pupils smoking on site and outside the school gates at the upper school
 - improve the attendance of pupils in key stage 4 and reduce the persistent absence rates across the school.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - finalising and implementing the new curriculum in key stages 1, 2 and 4
 - ensuring that the key stage 4 curriculum is aspirational and meets the needs of all pupils, including the most able
 - school leaders having ownership of and accountability for school improvement
 - leaders and governors using data effectively, so that they know about the progress of all pupils, groups and also comparative data, in order to challenge and support school improvement
 - ensuring that the actions taken and outcomes are recorded on the school's safeguarding system.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the school opened in December 2016 under the New Bridge Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), it has improved. The support that staff have received has undoubtedly had a positive impact. The foundation stone to future success has been laid. Spring Brook School is ready to take its next steps.
- There is, however, an over-reliance on multi-academy trust advice and support. Leaders were heavily supported during all the meetings with the inspection team, suggesting that the school is not yet able to stand on its own with assurance and confidence. Headteachers are not given the opportunity to take ownership and responsibility for the school.
- There is also an over-reliance on directors and advisers. This has resulted in some leaders not having the essential detail and knowledge about attendance and additional funding to be able to measure any impact.
- Staff appreciate the opportunities that they have for continuous professional development. They talk positively about the work with other schools in the multi-academy trust and how this supports them in the development of their own skills and knowledge.
- A review of the whole-school curriculum has had a positive impact in key stage 3. Pupils enjoy a wide range of national curriculum subjects. They study these alongside practical subjects, such as food technology, art and physical education. Leaders have implemented a model where the majority of lessons are taught by a form tutor. Consequently, strong working relationships have been established between the teacher and pupils. This has led to a more settled and productive learning environment.
- During this academic year in the lower school, leaders have been researching different approaches to the curriculum. This has included the use of creative methods alongside new approaches to mathematics, English and reading. However, this is still in the planning stage.
- The curriculum at key stage 4 meets the current needs of the pupils. Leaders decided to use topics that would engage and hook pupils into learning. This has been effective. Outcomes at key stage 4 have been rising. Leaders plan to move pupils in key stage 4 to a new campus from September 2019. However, leaders have failed to plan for the number of more-able pupils currently in year 9. Pupils have not had opportunities to discuss options that will enable them to achieve their future aspirations and potential outcomes. The current key stage 4 curriculum does not challenge or extend the learning of the more able pupils.
- The school supports the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils very well. Pupils have widened their cultural experiences through residential trips and other off-site activities, including trips to Wales and Paris. During the inspection, pupils in the lower school were engaging in a creative arts day. The school recently joined other schools in the MAT to plan and take part in a show. All pupils participated and worked well together, from making costumes to singing and performing.
- Leaders use additional funding effectively. Sport premium funding has resulted in a

high proportion of pupils exceeding their national swimming targets. Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium has been used to implement a system for baseline assessments. This is used to identify gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge, in order to target specific interventions and strategies to close those gaps.

- The school's use of the funding for pupils who are eligible for free school meals has been planned well. Funding has been used to purchase equipment to meet pupils' individual needs and enhance their learning experiences. Funding has also been used for intervention and one-to-one support. However, leaders do not have sufficient detail to form an accurate evaluation of the impact that the additional funding has had in closing the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils, both in school and nationally.

Governance of the school

- Governors are passionate and committed to improving the life chances and outcomes for pupils in Spring Brook Academy. They said that they have been 'on a journey'. They are overwhelmingly positive about the changes and the difference that the multi-academy trust has made.
- The trust has had an impact, especially around the professional development of the staff. Governors now have support and expertise around them. They can see the difference when they come into school. Governors said that staff morale has improved; there is now a positive atmosphere in school. Governors also said that staff are 'all on board'. This was overwhelmingly confirmed in the staff survey. One comment typified many: 'There is a fantastic team ethos in Spring Brook; this is among all levels of staff. Staff are always willing to help each other, I'm proud to be a member of the staff team.'
- The information that governors receive does not always provide the right detail so that governors can challenge and hold leaders to account. For example, governors were informed that a number of key stage 4 pupils were attending the vocational pathways programme at one of the trust schools. However, this is not the case. Reports on the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and the analysis of attendance also lack detail.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Across all key stages, there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff are vigilant to any behaviour that may indicate a cause for concern. They are quick to take action. Referrals to the designated safeguarding lead are prompt and detailed.
- Leaders take any necessary action and also follow up any referrals to external agencies, including the local authority. However, in some cases leaders' actions have not been recorded on the school's safeguarding system so that a chronology of events can be seen.
- Staff feel safe in school. They said that they are very well supported by their colleagues and the leadership team. Staff reported that behaviour and safety in school is much improved. Staff said that there is a positive ethos in school, with strong relationships

between pupils and staff.

- Staff training is up to date, with annual refreshers as well as local and regional updates. Training in the 'Prevent' duty is particularly strong.
- Pupils said that they feel safe in school. They talked warmly about the support that they receive from staff. They feel that they have adults they can go to for support, that they are valued and that their worries or concerns are listened to.
- Parents said that their children are listened to and that the adults in school care about them. As a result, parents said that their children feel happy and safe in school. Parents also appreciated the help and support that they receive as families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching and learning requires improvement because it varies across all key stages. In key stage 3, there was evidence of strong practice where teachers had planned carefully. Consequently, pupils were engaged and focused on their learning. For example, in mathematics, pupils were supporting each other to recap and challenge their own learning on equations. In English, pupils were not afraid to have a go and to make mistakes in practising homophones. In these subjects, work in pupils' books showed strong progress over time.
- However, in key stage 4, the picture was very different. The use of topics to hook pupils in did not appear to be doing that in life skills. A discussion on homelessness left pupils uninterested and bored. Some pupils' books showed that teachers had not challenged pupils as effectively as they could have.
- In key stages 1 and 2, it was a similarly mixed picture. In some classes, pupils responded well, were immersed in the activity and clearly enjoying their learning. In other classes, planning had not been effective enough to maintain pupils' focus on their learning.
- Work scrutiny showed that where teachers had used assessment effectively to plan next steps, there was evidence of strong progress over time. However, in other books, there was evidence that pupils had not been challenged in their learning, and their progress was weak.
- There is a good working relationship between teachers and support staff. There is a natural synergy between them, which works to fully support pupils' needs. Support staff are skilled in questioning pupils and supporting them to work independently.
- Classroom environments are welcoming and bright. Pupils' work and their achievements are celebrated in classrooms and around the school. Leaders have invested in a good range of resources, especially in the lower school, to support pupils' engagement in learning.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good
- The use of pupil profiles within the upper school helps all staff to know and understand how to meet the personal needs of each pupil. Staff know what strategies to use with pupils to support their social, emotional and mental health needs. This personalised approach works well. As a result, pupils settle well to their learning.
- In the lower school, the staff know every pupil extremely well. Staff develop strong and close relationships with pupils, parents and carers, so that pupils' needs are fully met and supported well.
- Leaders have invested in a number of resources to help pupils to understand and regulate their social, emotional and mental health needs. For example, nurture groups work to give pupils a safe space alongside mentoring support.
- Pupils said that they have learned how to manage their emotions. They are not as angry as they used to be and know how to step away from a negative situation. Parents also reported that their children are calmer and are able to self-regulate. Pupils have developed the skills of empathy, so that they are able to understand another person's point of view. Parents were also happy that their children in the lower school had made friends and were enjoying school.
- Parents were very happy with their children's progress. One comment summed up the views of many: 'This is one of the best schools; they are extremely responsive to my child's needs and adapt to his learning needs quickly and positively.'
- Pupils benefit from a well-structured work experience programme. They undertake work placements initially in school and then out in the workplace. The gradual approach allows pupils to build work-ready skills, such as communicating with confidence and working independently. The programme has worked so well that pupils eventually move into internships. Some pupils have then moved into paid employment.
- Pupils appreciate how the school helps them to prepare for their next steps in life. Through the curriculum, they look at future jobs and how to complete application forms. They have also learned about managing their money. Pupils talk to staff about their future aspirations. Staff support pupils to research and plan future careers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement
- During the inspection, at the upper school, there were pupils smoking on site and just outside the school gates with staff supervision. Although leaders have a policy that does not allow smoking, and all smoking materials are handed in on entry to school, this is clearly not working to stop pupils smoking. The mixed message of confiscation and then lunchtime supervision is confusing for pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is respectful and polite. Positive relationships were evident between staff and pupils at breaktimes. Activities at

breaktime in the lower school keep pupils busy and enjoying their break. In the upper school, pupils had plenty of spaces to go to.

- Pupils in key stage 4 do not attend school as regularly as they should do. Although there has been some improvement over the last two years, pupils' attendance is lower than national figures for similar schools. Although systems and procedures are in place to monitor and chase absent pupils, leaders do not have a strategic overview. Leaders do not analyse trends over time. They do not know what actions are having a positive impact in improving attendance.
- There is also a small number of pupils whose persistent absence is affecting the whole school's attendance. The outreach team has some dedicated and persistent staff who never give up and keep working with pupils until they find the 'hook' to re-engage them in education. Case studies confirm that the vast majority of pupils are making slow but steady improvements back into education.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The majority of pupils in the lower school enter with starting points below age-related expectations. However, their outcomes by the end of key stage 2 are good. Leaders capture the progress of pupils in a holistic way. Leaders measure pupils' progress in English, mathematics and other national curriculum subjects. Teachers also measure pupils' progress in relation to their self-esteem, behaviour, independence and communication.
- Pupils in key stage 3 are making strong progress. The school's own assessment system shows that pupils in years 8 and 9 are almost GCSE ready. Some pupils in year 9 have also achieved externally-accredited outcomes, including functional skills in English and mathematics.
- In key stage 4, pupils have consistently achieved nationally-recognised qualifications by the end of year 11. This includes entry level and functional skills in English and mathematics. Pupils also achieved GCSEs in art and design and product design.
- Pupils in key stage 4 have also achieved The Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award and the ASDAN Personal Development Award. The focus on personal skills is supporting pupils' development of independence, resilience, problem-solving and communication. This also helps to secure their readiness for their next steps in education or work.
- Pupils on the outreach programme have also taken part in and achieved The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. For pupils who have struggled to attend school and engage in education, taking part in residential activities is a huge achievement for them.
- The school's work experience programme is also having a strong impact on pupils' progress. Pupils have the skills to manage in a work environment. Case studies show how pupils leaving the school in year 11 have progressed into internships and then into paid employment.

School details

Unique reference number	143472
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10101029

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

Type of school	Primary and secondary special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	79
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Margaret Ramsbottom
Headteacher	Melanie Rodgers
Telephone number	0161 883 3431
Website	www.springbrookacademy.org
Email address	info@newbridgegroup.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Spring Brook Academy opened on 6 December 2016 as a school-sponsored academy conversion. It is now part of the New Bridge Multi-Academy Trust.
- The academy has its own local governing body and is accountable to the trustees of the New Bridge Multi-Academy Trust.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHCP) for their social, emotional and mental health needs. Most pupils also have secondary needs, including autism spectrum disorder and speech, language and communication needs.
- The academy has two sites. The lower school educates pupils in key stages 1 and 2. The upper school educates pupils in key stages 3 and 4.
- Some pupils join the academy late in their education, so the number of pupils arriving in year 9 to year 11 can be high.
- The academy does not use any alternative provision that pupils attend independently. Some pupils on an outreach programme attend 'Positive Cycles', sports centres and

libraries with their tutors.

- The school receives support from the multi-academy trust.
- The proportion of pupils who have an EHCP or a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average.
- Boys considerably outnumber girls.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in classes. They observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school at break and lunchtimes. Inspectors also assessed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books, in their pupil's profile information, case studies and the school's own assessment information.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteachers of the upper and lower schools and the chief executive officer. Inspectors met with directors and advisers throughout the inspection. Inspectors spoke to safeguarding leads, curriculum leads, outreach leads and pastoral leads.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the governing body and the trust, including the chair of the governing body and the chair of the trust.
- Inspectors took account of the two responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. An inspector met with a group of parents and also spoke to two parents on the telephone.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. However, inspectors met formally with pupils and also talked informally to pupils throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of the 34 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and also spoke to staff throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including: minutes of governing body meetings; reports to trust improvement boards; information on pupils' progress; the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan; behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sue Eastwood

Her Majesty's 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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