

Inspection of South Witham Academy

Water Lane, South Witham, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG33 5PH

Inspection dates: 1–2 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy their time at South Witham. Most are happy in school. They get on well with each other. Pupils say that there is very little bullying, but when it happens, they are confident to speak to an adult, who will help sort it out quickly.

Most pupils are welcoming, polite and well mannered. They behave well in lessons and at playtimes. They are keen to be involved in sporting and musical activities at the end of the school day.

In the Nursery class, children get off to a flying start. However, as pupils move through the school, the teaching is not planned well enough. Teachers' expectations are not high enough. We saw some pupils lose interest in class because the work was either too hard or too easy. Pupils do not do well enough, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school helps pupils to become responsible and self-confident individuals. All staff reinforce the importance of building resilience and values such as honesty and respect. Pupils benefit from a range of experiences that promote their personal development well.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum is not planned well enough. As a result, pupils are not doing as well as they could do. Leaders have focused on improving mathematics and writing. The teaching of reading is not good enough.

Too many younger pupils struggle to learn how to read. This is because some staff have not been trained to teach phonics and do not understand how to use the phonics scheme. Adults do not use the reading resources well to improve pupils' reading. Often the books pupils read are too difficult and hinder them from becoming fluent readers. Leaders and teachers have not yet developed a love of reading among pupils.

The curriculum plans for writing are better. They show how pupils gain knowledge and build their writing skills during their time at school. Leaders are aware that improving pupils' reading will also improve writing.

Leaders have improved the mathematics curriculum. Because of poor teaching in the past, older pupils have many gaps in their learning. Teachers now make sure that pupils know the basics before they apply the mathematics to real-life situations. There is still much to do to improve pupils' learning in mathematics.

Some pupils enjoy their science lessons, especially when they are interested in the topic. However, the science curriculum is in the early stages of development. In subjects such as art, history and religious education, leaders are beginning to develop curriculum plans that set out what they expect pupils to learn.

Teachers make sure that pupils' behaviour around the school is polite and respectful. However, they do not insist on consistently good behaviour in classrooms. In some classes, there is too much low-level disruption and off-task behaviour. Leaders take the right steps to support and deal with the small number of pupils whose behaviour is very poor.

Leaders are working with parents and carers whose children do not attend regularly. This work is beginning to improve the attendance of some pupils. There is more to be done to improve the attitudes of some pupils so that they attend more often.

Adults make sure that children get off to a good start in the Nursery class. Children follow routines and develop positive habits and attitudes. Adults provide a range of opportunities. Children play, explore, learn and think creatively. Teachers care for the children well. They prepare children well for the Reception class.

Leaders have brought about many changes since the school became an academy. Many parents commented positively about these changes. Leaders know that there is more to do to improve the curriculum and teaching.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders carry out all the required checks on new staff before they start working at the school. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They are aware of the risks that pupils face and can spot any signs that might worry them about a pupil's well-being. They know how to report a concern about a pupil. Leaders work closely with other agencies to support pupils and their families when needed. Pupils are taught about safety and know how to keep themselves safe. They learn about, for example, road safety, beach safety and how to be safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has gone through much turmoil since becoming an academy. This is because of the many changes that were needed to improve it. Governors need to ensure that leaders, especially middle leaders, receive training to make them more effective leaders and managers.
- Pupils' reading skills are not good enough. This is because adults are not trained well enough to teach the phonics programme. Leaders need to ensure that teachers are suitably trained, plan learning to meet pupils' needs, use resources well and foster a love of reading among all pupils.
- The school's curriculum is not sequenced well enough, and curriculum coverage in foundation subjects is not aspirational. Leaders need to ensure that there is a clear sequence of learning for all subjects and that pupils are challenged to know more and remember more.

- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of all pupils. As a result, some pupils lose interest in their work and do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders need to ensure that teachers raise their expectations so that all pupils develop positive attitudes to their learning.
- Too many pupils are persistently absent. These pupils fall behind with their learning and underachieve. Leaders need to continue to work with parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	143518
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10110031
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	131
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Simon Foulkes
Executive Headteacher	Sharon Milner
Website	www.south-witham.lincs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened a nursery provision in October 2018. This provides for two- and three-year-old children.
- South Witham Academy became an academy on 1 November 2016. When its predecessor school, South Witham Community Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require special measures.
- The school is part of Brooke Hill Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher and the head of school. The lead inspector met three trustees and spoke with the chair of trustees on the telephone.
- Inspectors visited all classes with a senior leader, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils about their schoolwork. They met with subject leaders and class teachers.

- Inspectors focused on reading, mathematics, science and art. They also looked at religious education, Spanish and history on the second day of the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader (DSL) and looked at safeguarding records. He also met with the special needs coordinator (SENCO).
- An inspector listened to several pupils read. Inspectors met with groups of pupils to talk about the quality of education and other aspects of school life.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents. They looked at the school's website, policies and published information about the school's performance.
- Inspectors observed pupils playing at breaktime. Inspectors spoke with parents. The views of 16 parents who completed the Ofsted Parent View survey were considered.
- Inspectors considered the 16 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. They also considered the 26 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Chris Davies, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Savage

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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