

# Inspection of a good school: Springwell Alternative Academy

St Helen's Boulevard, Carlton Road, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S71 2AY

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Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2023

## Outcome

Springwell Alternative Academy continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending Springwell. They feel valued, safe and understood. There are strong, positive relationships between staff and pupils. As a result, staff get the best from pupils and pupils want to do well.

The morning nurture breakfast gets pupils off to a good start. Leaders make sure that pupils learn the practical skills of making breakfast, how to take turns and how to work collaboratively. They then get the chance to burn off some energy by either playing football or accessing the gym trail.

There is a mutual respect between pupils. They understand why they are attending the school. This results in most classes being calm, orderly and purposeful. Pupils know what bullying is but it is not something that is a problem at school. At times, there is the potential for behaviour to disrupt learning, but staff manage challenging behaviour with great skill.

Pupils appreciate the opportunities they have to speak to staff if they have a worry or concern. Older pupils welcome the post-16 advice they receive. The support leaders have put in place for future employment, training and education is invaluable.

The experience many pupils have at Springwell supports their development beyond the school gates. Some parents talk about significant improvements at home in children's behaviour and attitude.

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

Leaders provide a curriculum that strives to reignite pupils' interest and engagement. It purposefully differs from previous approaches that may have disaffected pupils in the past. Many pupils are referred to the school with extremely low attendance and negative attitudes towards education. However, once pupils start school at Springwell, their attitudes quickly change. Within a short period of time, pupils are engaged in their

learning and enjoy school. This is due to the impressive nurture and curriculum support that pupils receive. Teachers breakdown the curriculum into small chunks of learning. They use games and quizzes to hook pupils into the curriculum. Staff use humour, high-quality questioning and create non-threatening classroom environments to help pupils to manage their emotions and to access the curriculum.

Leaders recognised that as many pupils arrive at different times of the year, large novels and texts can be difficult to teach. Teachers now select extracts from texts to support pupils' reading and writing at key stage 3 and 4. Pupils who require extra help with their basic reading receive daily phonics sessions, where required. Leaders recognise the challenges they face to engage pupils with reading. There is currently more work to do to raise the profile of reading and create a positive reading culture across the school.

Staff check what knowledge pupils have when they start school. They also assess pupils' behaviour, attitudes to learning and how they will get on with other pupils before deciding where to place a pupil at key stage 3 and 4. This process is vital in ensuring that pupils get the best chance to succeed. Once on roll, pupils receive a 'personalised aspiration map'. Targets on the maps include attendance, English and mathematics, the wider curriculum and 'my future'. Teachers make sure that the work they set pupils matches the targets that pupils have been set. Work in books accurately matches targets set each half term and next steps are carefully planned following reviews between teachers and pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported by staff. The special educational needs coordinator has a daily debrief meeting with teachers to address any curriculum or emotional adaptations that pupils with SEND may require.

Leaders provide a range of experiences for pupils through curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. Leaders are aware that they need to teach pupils about personal and social issues explicitly as these are areas where many pupils experience difficulties. As a result, leaders have designed a personal development curriculum that runs from key stage 1 to key stage 4. This includes 13 important topics, such as self-esteem, resilience, self-regulation, bereavement and peer pressure. Leaders also react to group or individual need and provide bespoke support if particular issues arise. An example of this is how leaders responded quickly to the inappropriate use of social media in the community. Targeted curriculum support enabled pupils to see the negative impact it was having, with the pupils then educating others on the dangers of its misuse.

Multi-academy trust leaders, the governing body and school leaders work together effectively. They have created an environment where staff feel valued and trusted. Layers of accountability and quality assurance procedures are well established and ensure that trustees and governors have an accurate picture of the schools' performance. Governors visit the school regularly to assess what impact decisions taken by leaders are having. All leaders appreciate the challenge of securing improved attendance for pupils. Currently, attendance for too many pupils is not good enough.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders successfully manage many complex safeguarding issues. The designated safeguarding lead attends a daily briefing with other services, such as police, health and social care. This sharing of information among services provides up-to-date, vital intelligence. Staff are aware of local, contextual issues that impact on pupils' lives outside of school. They provide appropriate curriculum support through the personal development programme. Leaders also provide targeted support for pupils who may need bespoke guidance on specific safeguarding issues. Leaders from the multi-academy trust conduct regular quality assurance of safeguarding procedures and provide ongoing advice and support.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders have not done enough to encourage pupils to see the value of reading and overcome pupils' negative experiences of reading. As a result, pupils are disinterested in reading and do not see the value of reading for pleasure. Leaders should work with staff to encourage pupils to read more and recognise its importance.
- Attendance remains too low for too many pupils. This means that pupils miss out on the curriculum and are not doing as well as they could at school. Leaders need to strengthen and adapt their approach to attendance to ensure that pupils attend school regularly.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2017.

## **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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141564
<b>Local authority</b>	Barnsley
<b>Inspection number</b>	10242242
<b>Type of school</b>	Alternative provision academy
<b>School category</b>	Academy alternative provision converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	64
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Cheryl Hobson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lydia Harrison
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.springwelllearningcommunity.co.uk">www.springwelllearningcommunity.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	8 and 9 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school operates across four sites. Some pupils in the primary site access lessons alongside pupils at Springwell special academy. Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 are taught in mixed ages.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Wellspring Academy Trust.
- The school provides day 6 provision for pupils who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools.
- Pupils attend the school for a minimum of two terms.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors did deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics and personal, social and health education. Inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum and met with teachers from the lessons visited. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils about the curriculum, behaviour and what it is like to attend this school.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum documents from a range of subjects.
- Inspectors listened to a range of pupils read from different year groups.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator, members of the local governing body and representatives from the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors looked at the single central record and spoke to leaders, teachers, governors, and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors considered the responses made by parents via free-text responses, plus Ofsted's staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors visited all four sites.

### **Inspection team**

David Milligan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Pauline Rowland

Ofsted Inspector

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