

Inspection of John Smeaton Academy

Barwick Road, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS15 8TA

Inspection dates: 30 April to 1 May 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Not previously inspected

The principal of this school is Andrew Moncur. This school is part of The Gorse Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sir John Townsley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anne McAvan.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff have worked closely with pupils to bring about a startling transformation at this school. Pupils share the ambitions that staff have for them and value the kindness shown to them. This school is now a beacon for its community. Pupils, staff, parents and carers are right to be proud of all that they have achieved.

Pupils behave well. They are kind to their peers and speak to staff and visitors with warmth and respect. Pupils increasingly benefit from the well-considered curriculum that is in place. Some pupils join the school at different points of the school year. Staff take time to find out what each pupil needs. As a result, pupils settle in quickly.

Older pupils speak of the positive changes they have seen and the opportunities that they now have. They know that the school is providing them with 'the gift of choice'. They are increasingly well prepared for their next steps.

The school is determined to address disadvantage, to raise pupils' ambitions and give them opportunities to develop their talents and interests. The 'enrichment++' clubs and activities are numerous, well attended and include the 'BIG 3' of karate, rowing and volleyball. Pupils experience many exciting trips and competitions alongside opportunities to give something back to the community. All of this, and more, helps pupils to flourish.

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

Trust and school leaders have swiftly improved the quality of education, carefully considering the important subject knowledge that pupils need to know and understand. Teachers provide clear explanations that help pupils to comprehend new learning. Pupils are increasingly able to recall what they have been taught before. This strong learning is not reflected in historic published outcomes at key stage 4. Pupils now benefit from a highly effective curriculum that is increasingly well taught.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Teaching staff ensure that pupils with SEND access the curriculum alongside their peers. The Horizons resource provision is a vibrant, supportive environment with a tailored curriculum that focuses on teaching and reinforcing important principles and beliefs alongside academic subjects. The work that the school does to support all pupils with SEND is testament to their commitment to inclusive education.

Staff promptly identify pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. These pupils receive personalised support from trained staff. As a result, they quickly learn to read with greater confidence.

Staff have worked with pupils to transform standards of behaviour. A consistent 'positive discipline' approach, rooted in caring kindness and active intervention, is

consistently in place throughout the school. Staff uphold high expectations of pupil behaviour, offering support to those who struggle to meet these standards. Corridors are filled with calm, happy pupils who chat to their friends as they move between lessons. There are warm relationships between pupils and teaching staff. The school has created an environment where pupils' learning thrives, enabling them to get the most from the ambitious curriculum. Bullying, though rare, is promptly addressed. Pupils are confident to raise concerns. They know that staff will help them.

Some pupils struggle to attend school sufficiently often. This means that they miss out on important learning and wider opportunities. All staff know the role that they have in improving attendance. A range of strategies are in place, including schemes such as the 100% attendance club. Although there are green shoots of improvement in attendance, there is much more to be done.

The school's ethos and values spread through the personal development curriculum. Important topics such as financial education and holistic well-being are thoughtfully integrated. Student ambassadors champion the school's core values, actively participating in shaping positive change. Events like the 'GORSE games', reward trips and the variety of clubs build a strong sense of community and belonging among pupils. Pupils increasingly see this school as being for them, supporting them and giving them the gift of choice, enabling them to shape their own futures.

Trust leaders and governors carefully check that leaders are making the right decisions in the best interests of pupils. The 'rigour with kindness' ethos is evident throughout leaders' work. Staff are enthusiastic about the ongoing improvement that continues at pace. Early career teachers are well supported by their mentors, leaders and the trust. All staff spoken to were fulsome in their praise of the school and leaders. In many areas, there has been significant improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not attend school often enough and miss out on important learning. This limits the amount of progress that they make. The school should review and intensify actions to improve attendance so that all pupils succeed.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	148793
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	10323150
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	611
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anne McAvan
Principal	Andrew Moncur
Website	www.johnsmeatonacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Since joining The Gorse Academies Trust on 1 September 2021, a number of new leaders have been appointed. The current headteacher took up post from June 2023.
- The school has an on-site resourced provision for pupils with complex communication needs. At the time of the inspection, 22 pupils were enrolled at this provision.
- The school makes use of two providers of off-site alternative education. All providers are registered and subject to inspection by Ofsted.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- When the predecessor school, John Smeaton Academy, was previously inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be inadequate overall.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken it into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, including the chief executive officer of the trust, representatives of the trust board and members of the local governing body. They reviewed documentation relating to governance, including minutes of the governing body and wider governance meetings.
- To evaluate the quality of education, deep dives were carried out in English, science, physical education and history. Inspectors spoke with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at books and spoke to pupils. Inspectors considered the wider curriculum including PSHE and visited lessons in some other subjects. An inspector listened to some pupils read aloud.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the view of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation relating to behaviour and attendance. Inspectors spoke to leaders, staff and pupils about these aspects.
- Inspectors met with pupils both formally and informally, including single-sex groups of pupils. The views of pupils were also considered through the Ofsted pupil survey.
- The views of staff were considered through discussions with staff and from the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through the response to the Ofsted Parent View survey, and through discussions held with some parents.

Inspection team

Eleanor Belfield, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Damian Matthews	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Crane	Ofsted Inspector
John Linkins	His Majesty's Inspector

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