

Inspection of The Gainsborough Academy

Sweyn Lane, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire DN21 1PB

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 July 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

The headteacher of this school is Rachael Skelton. This school is part of the Wickersley Partnership Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Helen O'Brien, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Steve Calvert.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils, staff, and parents and carers agree that this school is improving. Raised expectations are helping to change the school's culture. Pupils' attendance is increasing and their behaviour is getting better. Most pupils feel safe. There is a growing confidence that staff will resolve any bullying concerns. However, some pupils do not come to school often enough and miss out on important learning. Other pupils struggle to conduct themselves consistently well. Therefore, despite the improvements since the previous inspection, there is more work to do.

Pupils appreciate the wide range of subjects they can study. An increasing number of pupils follow the English Baccalaureate at key stage 4. Most pupils want to learn and do well. A reduction in low-level disruption helps them to focus during lessons. However, some pupils lack belief in their own abilities to be successful. Pupils' outcomes are improving. However, they do not achieve as well as they could by the end of key stage 4.

The majority of pupils get on well together. They show each other and staff respect. The recent introduction of the 'proud podium' gives pupils the chance to celebrate each other's successes. Pupils' experiences are enriched through the 'pledge' programme. These opportunities help pupils to become 'able and qualified' before they leave school.

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

School and trust leaders have an ambitious vision for the school to help it overcome the barriers that it faces. A sustained focus on the key priorities is making a positive difference. Increased leadership capacity and additional resources have helped to bring about some marked improvements. The school is actively involved in the local community so that others can hear about the positive work that is taking place. However, leaders have not ensured that all stakeholders, including pupils, staff and parents, understand why these changes are necessary.

The planned curriculum provides a clear structure for what pupils need to know and how they will make progress. Careful thought has been given to when pupils learn new knowledge and skills, and how these link to what has gone before. The school's curriculum is well suited to its particular context and the experiences of its pupils.

There are variations in how well the curriculum is implemented. Whole-school strategies such as 'flashbacks' and 'get ready' tasks are used consistently to revisit previous learning and prepare pupils for what comes next. However, these activities sometimes lack ambition and do not always help pupils recall their knowledge in sufficient detail. Teachers' questions are sometimes quite superficial. Pupils are not always encouraged to think more deeply or explain their ideas. Some of them do not respond well enough to opportunities to improve their work. Teachers sometimes move the learning on before all pupils have a secure understanding of the key ideas.

While some pupils achieve well, others struggle to remember what they have learned, particularly when that learning is less recent.

Reading is given a high priority. Pupils enjoy reading their class novel with their tutor. Any pupils who find reading tricky get extra help so that they become confident and fluent readers.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are carefully identified. Many of these pupils benefit from adaptations that help them follow the same curriculum as their peers, although this support is not always consistent.

The school works hard to keep all pupils engaged with education. Its 'meet, greet and sweep' approach ensures that most pupils are in lessons from the start. In-school provisions offer pupils valuable alternatives to mainstream lessons. Pupils who access these provisions appreciate the additional support they get so that they can keep on learning. Despite these strategies, suspensions remain too high, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. These same pupils do not attend school as well as they should. The school tracks the large number of pupils who leave mid-year closely to make sure that they all remain in education.

The delivery of the personal development programme is becoming more consistent. There is a keen focus on helping pupils understand issues that might affect them, such as looking after their mental health or managing their money. Pupils' knowledge of important British values is improving. They have a good understanding of equality and difference. There are more opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles. Pupils benefit from helpful careers advice and guidance, and there are plans to increase opportunities for work experience. However, not enough is done to develop pupils' character or their resilience.

Most staff enjoy working at the school. However, some do not feel well supported in their roles. They do not think that their workload or well-being are always taken into consideration as part of the changes necessary to improve the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The implementation of the planned curriculum is not consistent. The quality of teachers' questions and their checks of pupils' learning are not always effective. Pupils' recall of what they have learned in some subjects is variable. They do not always achieve as well as they should. The school must make sure that the curriculum is delivered consistently well in each subject and every year group.

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Some pupils complete their work with relative ease. They are not challenged sufficiently well to deepen their knowledge and understanding. The school needs to ensure that the curriculum in each subject is suitably ambitious for all pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is improving. However, a decreasing number of pupils struggle to meet the school's raised behaviour expectations. These pupils show a lack of respect for others, sometimes disrupting lessons and social times. As a result, suspensions and permanent exclusions remain too high, particularly of pupils who are vulnerable. The school must make sure that all pupils get the support they need to behave well.
- While most pupils are keen to learn and do well, some pupils lack confidence in their ability to do so. They do not engage fully with activities during lessons and avoid sharing their ideas for fear of getting things wrong. The school needs to encourage all pupils to become resilient and independent learners who are committed to achieving their full potential.
- Pupils' attendance is slowly rising. However, there are too many pupils who are persistently absent from school, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. These pupils miss out on valuable learning opportunities and on experiences that support their wider personal development. The school needs to ensure that all pupils attend school well.
- Plans to improve the school are ambitious. However, some pupils, staff and parents do not share the school's vision for what pupils are capable of achieving. Some of these stakeholders do not think the school values their opinions or takes their views into account. The school should work alongside all stakeholders to remove any barriers that prevent the school from continuing to improve.

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	145954
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10324200
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	698
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Steve Calvert
CEO	Helen O'Brien
Headteacher	Rachael Skelton
Website	www.thegainsboroughacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 May 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Wickersley Partnership Trust.
- The school appointed a new deputy headteacher in February 2024. Two assistant headteachers joined the school in January 2024 and May 2024, respectively. There have also been several other changes to staff since the previous inspection.
- A large number of pupils join and leave the school each year.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the CEO and other senior school leaders. They also met with some representatives of the multi-academy trust.
- The lead inspector met with those responsible for governance, including the chair of the board of trustees and the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into the following subjects: mathematics, English, design and technology, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, spoke with teachers and pupils, looked at samples of pupils' work and visited lessons. They also listened to some pupils reading to a familiar adult. On the second day of the inspection, inspectors examined the curriculum in a wider range of subjects.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from a range of different year groups, including pupils with SEND. Inspectors visited some tutor sessions. They spoke with pupils informally and observed their behaviour during social times.
- Inspectors visited the school's 'BASE' and 'PHASE' provisions, as well as the 'induction centre' for pupils who have recently joined the school.
- Inspectors spoke on the telephone with representatives of two of the unregistered providers used by the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and the results of Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff, parents 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 reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan and information about governance. Inspectors also considered information about pupils' attendance and behaviour and the wider curriculum.

Inspection team

Rachel Tordoff, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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