

Inspection of South Axholme Academy

Burnham Road, Epworth, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN9 1BY

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 January 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

South Axholme Academy is a warm and welcoming school. Leaders ensure that their decisions support pupils to achieve excellence and be ready, respectful and resilient in all that they do.

Pupils' behaviour is calm and purposeful. They show high levels of self-control. In lessons, pupils focus fully on their work. Disruption to learning is exceptionally uncommon. Pupils get along well together and with adults working in the school. Bullying is very rare but, if it does happen, it is dealt with speedily and effectively. Pupils feel safe in school.

Pupils benefit from a well-considered personal development curriculum that supports them to be ready for the next stage of their educational journey and for life in modern Britain. The personal development program for students in the sixth form is not as carefully designed. Some sixth-form students do not feel well prepared for the next stages of their lives.

Pupils, and students, receive a high-quality education. This includes those post-16 students who receive some of their lessons at another college. Leaders have designed ambitious curriculums. Teachers are skilled and knowledgeable. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. Pupils learn effectively and achieve highly in the qualifications they study.

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

In most subjects, leaders have carefully identified the crucial knowledge and skills that they want pupils to learn within each 'unit' of work. What pupils learn is carefully planned so that new learning builds carefully upon what pupils have learned previously. For example, in food technology, leaders have designed a curriculum where the recipes chosen provide opportunities for pupils to practise skills and techniques they have learned previously, while also learning new ones. Teachers know and understand the aims of the curriculum. They check what pupils already know, and adjust their teaching appropriately. In most subjects, pupils' learning is impressive. They know and understand what they have been taught. They achieve highly at the end of Year 11.

In a small number of subjects, the curriculum has not been as carefully considered. In these subjects, planning has historically focused on the activities that pupils will undertake, rather than on what pupils are expected to learn. As a result, pupils learn less. They have not achieved as highly in these subjects. Leaders have taken decisive action to address these weaknesses. There are positive signs of improvement. Pupils' learning is already starting to improve.

South Axholme Academy is a 'school that reads'. Pupils read with their form tutors weekly. Those pupils who are at the earlier stages of learning to read are carefully

assessed and receive additional support that is carefully matched to their needs. As a result, their reading improves quickly.

Leaders have decided to close the sixth-form provision in school. It will close fully at the end of this academic year. The sixth form now consists of a small number of Year 13 students. Leaders are committed to these students having a high-quality education. To ensure that students receive high-quality teaching from subject-specialist teachers, leaders arranged for some lessons to take place at another college. Leaders check that students are learning well, whether lessons are taking place at South Axholme Academy or elsewhere.

Pupils benefit from an established, and carefully planned, personal development programme. Careful thought has been given as to how general studies lessons, assemblies and the wider enrichment programme work together to provide pupils with the information, knowledge and skills that they need ready for their next stage of education, employment, training and/or adult life. Pupils have strong knowledge of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. The personal development programme for students in the sixth form is not as well considered. Sixth-form students benefit from a range of activities and experiences, but these do not form part of a coherent, well-considered programme. As a result, some students in the sixth form do not feel fully prepared for the next stage of their lives.

The special educational needs coordinator and staff responsible for behaviour, attendance and safeguarding work together exceptionally well to support those pupils who need extra support. This includes carefully tailored support for those pupils who have been suspended from school. Very few pupils who receive a suspension from school do so again. Attendance to school is high. Pupils' behaviour around school is exceptionally positive.

Staff are proud to work at South Axholme Academy. They appreciate the work of leaders to manage their workload. Professional development is focused on the things that will make the biggest difference to pupils in the academy. Professional development time is used effectively.

Those responsible for governance know the academy well. They provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders to ensure that pupils receive the very best education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is much more than a policy. Through frequent training, they ensure that all staff know the risks that pupils and students may face and the signs that they may be at risk. Staff understand the importance of reporting any concerns they may have. When concerns are raised, the designated safeguarding lead takes appropriate steps to help keep pupils safe.

Where students receive some of their education at other institutions, leaders have ensured that there are suitable arrangements for sharing safeguarding information.

Leaders ensure that the general studies curriculum teaches pupils about the risks they may face growing up and how to keep themselves safe. Where new risks emerge, locally or nationally, leaders ensure that the curriculum is adjusted to reflect these new risks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in a small number of subjects is not carefully planned, and implementation is less consistent. As a result, pupils' learning is not as strong in these subjects by the end of key stage 3. Pupils who take these subjects at GCSE do not perform as highly. Leaders should ensure that the plans, and steps already taken, to improve the quality of education in these subjects are implemented and carefully monitored for effectiveness.
- Students in key stage 5 do not benefit from a coherent personal development programme. As a result, students are not, and do not, feel fully prepared for the next stages of their lives. Leaders must ensure that the personal development programme for those students who remain in the sixth form meets their needs.

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

Unique reference number	137742
Local authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10248458
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	965
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Barratt
Principal	Scott Barlow
Website	www.southaxholmeacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 and 4 October 2017

Information about this school

- The academy is part of the Isle Education Trust
- The academy's sixth form is in the process of closing. Only Year 13 students remain in the sixth form. To ensure that all lessons are taught by subject specialists, leaders have arranged for some sixth-form courses to be taught at another college.
- The school use five alternative provisions, two of which are unregistered.
- 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

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal and several other senior leaders, including those responsible for behaviour, personal development, the sixth form and safeguarding. The lead inspector also met with a group of trustees and governors, and the chief executive officer of the Isle Education Trust.
- To evaluate the quality of education, inspectors undertook deep dives in mathematics, history, expressive arts, modern foreign languages and food technology. As part of the deep dive process, inspectors spoke to curriculum leaders and groups of teachers, talked with pupils and students about their work, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' and students' work. Inspectors also met with leaders responsible for the reading programme in school and visited reading sessions.
- Inspectors reviewed the systems that the school has in place to keep pupils safe. We spoke to several groups of pupils, including some single-gender groups, to listen to their experiences of academy life. Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding records to ensure appropriate actions are being taken to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors met with the academy's special educational needs coordinator to check the systems that the school has in place to support vulnerable pupils and those with additional needs.
- The inspection team spoke to a range of staff from across the academy and reviewed the responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally, and informally, throughout the inspection and considered the responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered the outcomes of the parent survey and the free-text responses that many parents added.

Inspection team

Steve Wren, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Garry Stout	Ofsted Inspector
Angela White	Ofsted Inspector
Gordon Watts	Ofsted Inspector

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