

Somercotes Academy

Keeling Street, North Somercotes, Louth, Lincolnshire LN11 7PN

Inspection dates

27–28 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The determined leadership of the principal and senior leaders has successfully created a positive and inclusive culture that staff and pupils have embraced.
- The support provided by governors and trust leaders has been instrumental in securing improvements at the school and, consequently, a rise in the number of pupils attending.
- The leadership of the curriculum is good. Leaders and governors have ensured that it now meets the needs and aspirations of all pupils.
- The quality of teaching is good. Leaders have ensured that effective opportunities for professional development have secured greater consistency of teaching and pupils' behaviour.
- Pastoral support for pupils is effective and has brought about improvements in pupils' behaviour and attendance. The programme for pupils' personal, social and health education is well coordinated and is complemented by services to support pupils' emotional and mental well-being.
- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective and leaders have established a culture of vigilance in the school. Pupils say that they feel safe and happy. Parents strongly agree.
- Pupils behave well. They are polite and courteous. They understand the values of the school and reflect these values in their conduct around the school site. They wear their uniform smartly and with pride.
- Pupils benefit from a well-coordinated programme of careers education from Year 7. This enables all pupils to secure appropriate next steps in further education, employment or training.
- The quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes in science has been consistently strong for at least two years.
- The funding for Year 7 pupil catch-up in literacy and numeracy is successfully enabling identified pupils to catch up with their peers.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported and are beginning to make stronger progress as a result.
- The progress made by pupils across the curriculum is strengthening. Previous variations between subject outcomes are reducing quickly, particularly at key stage 3. However, too few of the most able pupils achieve the higher grades by the end of key stage 4, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The progress made by the most able and disadvantaged pupils by the end of key stage 4 is not yet strong enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes at key stage 4 by ensuring that pupils, particularly the most able and the disadvantaged pupils, consistently make stronger progress across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The determined leadership of the recently appointed principal, who is well supported by senior leaders, governors and trust leaders, has brought about rapid improvements at the school. A clear vision for the future direction and success of the school has been communicated effectively to staff and the wider community. This vision is underpinned by a comprehensive development plan.
- The investment from the Tollbar Multi-Academy Trust (the trust) has been instrumental in improving the school environment, the security of the site and the recruitment of high-quality staff. Rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and the effectiveness of pastoral care at the school have restored the faith of parents within the local community. As a consequence, the number of pupils attending the school is rising quickly.
- The positive ethos and culture of the school are underpinned by a core set of values which are well understood by staff and pupils. Leaders have been successful in creating a culture of high expectations in a supportive climate and this has generated a positive morale amongst the staff. Leaders maintain a visible presence around the school and in lessons.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed throughout the school, both in curriculum lessons and through a range of extra-curricular learning in sports, art, music and technology. However, pupils say that they would like more of this.
- Leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching and of pupils' personal development and behaviour is accurate and informed by robust processes for checking the quality of the school's provision.
- The leadership of the curriculum is effective. Pupils access a broad and balanced range of subjects at key stages 3 and 4. Following the examination results in 2018, leaders made important changes to the curriculum that have improved pupils' learning and progress. For example, pupils are now grouped in lessons so that their needs can be better met. Furthermore, some subject qualifications at key stage 4 have been recently changed to improve pupils' confidence and future success.
- Leaders have improved the way they set targets for pupils and check their progress against these targets. The progress of current pupils is improving across all subjects, including in those subjects that have been weaker in the past.
- Leaders provide effective support for teachers whose practice has not always been strong enough. Successful coaching and mentoring programmes are resulting in clear improvements.
- The well-planned and coordinated programme of professional development is having a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and the accuracy of assessment. Opportunities for sharing effective practice are regular and use expertise in the school and the wider trust effectively. Teachers say that they value these opportunities. However, it is too soon to see the impact of recent initiatives on

improving outcomes at the end of key stage 4.

- Subject leaders are clear about leaders' expectations. They are stringently held to account and say that they are well supported by leaders. For example, professional development opportunities on curriculum planning within the school and the trust have raised the profile of the most able pupils so that their needs are being more successfully met. In addition, regular opportunities are created within the trust's subject networks to ensure accuracy and reliability in teachers' assessments, particularly in readiness for examinations at key stage 4.
- The leadership of pupils with SEND is strong. Pupils receive highly personalised support from leaders and additional adults within the school. Leaders' engagement with parents and external agencies is effective. As one parent put it, 'The dedication of the teaching staff is the only reason my child is still in a mainstream school.'
- Leaders use catch-up funding in Year 7 well. Pupils who arrive at the school with skills in literacy and numeracy below those expected for their age are provided with effective support. As a result, these pupils catch up with their peers quickly. Leaders have extended this programme into Year 8 for some pupils to support their further progress.
- Leaders have successfully implemented a carefully considered programme of careers education beginning in Year 7. As a result of high-quality information and guidance, all pupils have secured appropriate next steps in education, employment or training. This is an ongoing trend.
- Newly qualified teachers are positive about the support they have received as they begin their professional careers.
- Leaders' actions have yet to ensure that the spending of the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils is having the desired impact on pupils' outcomes. Although leaders can account for the spending of the pupil premium, their evaluation of this aspect of the school's work is less effective because there are no specific criteria by which to measure success. As a result, governors are less able to hold senior leaders to account for this spending.
- The clear majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey would recommend the school and believe it is well led and managed.

Governance of the school

- Arrangements for governance are strong and effective.
- Governors are highly skilled and knowledgeable. They know the areas of strength and weakness of the school and are kept very well-informed about the school's development priorities. Governors receive high-quality and accurate information from school leaders. They visit the school regularly in support of the school's development priorities.
- Governors care deeply about the school and are ambitious for the future. They are keen to see outcomes for pupils improve rapidly. Members of the local governing body have played a key role in holding senior leaders to account and ask challenging questions within a culture of high support.
- Governors use their expertise to support the school's ongoing improvement. For example, they are determined to see further improvements in pupils' attendance. They

have also secured, with the trust, a high calibre of staffing which has helped to rapidly improve the quality of teaching.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors ensure that all the necessary checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children. Effective procedures are in place to ensure that all visitors to the school are appropriately checked.
- The training for staff and governors in safeguarding is thorough. Staff receive regular training and safeguarding updates and are vigilant of the signs that a pupil may be at risk of being harmed. Leaders work with determination to ensure that pupils receive the right support in the school's inclusion room, from the school counsellor and through work with external agencies and parents.
- All staff understand what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being. School records are detailed and well organised. Prompt action is taken when necessary to keep pupils safe. Pupils know who they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns.
- Leaders have paid specific attention to ensuring that the school site is kept secure at all times.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils benefit from teaching that is mostly of good quality. Some teaching, for example in science and humanities, is exceptionally strong.
- The pupils who spoke with inspectors were very positive about their learning experiences overall. The trust has ensured that all lessons are taught by subject specialists, bringing about a greater consistency of teaching. The quality of teaching in subjects which was previously poor or affected by instability in staffing is much improved, particularly in French and mathematics.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are high. Teachers know their pupils well and plan activities that stimulate their interest. Resources are used well, and activities are thoughtfully sequenced so that little time is wasted. Consequently, pupils engage purposefully with their learning and say that they feel well supported.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it enthusiastically to question pupils about their understanding. This was seen in many lessons including, for example, a Year 7 history lesson about the control of the Roman Empire. The questioning probed pupils' understanding, drawing upon their prior knowledge. Pupils rose to the challenge.
- Strategies to strengthen teachers' skills in providing work which is suitably challenging are beginning to have a positive effect in extending pupils' thinking, particularly at key stage 3. This was evident in a Year 8 computing lesson, for example, to develop skills in digital graphics.
- Most pupils behave well and work hard. Teachers are quick to challenge pupils who are

distracted and pupils follow instructions promptly. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are positive.

- The school's policy on providing feedback is used consistently by all teachers. Pupils are informed about their successes in learning and how they can further improve their work. Pupils are improving their ability to use and apply the advice they receive from their teachers.
- Teachers ensure that their assessment of pupils' work is purposeful and reliable. Pupils say that they find their 'best books' for examination assessments helpful so that they can practise their skills. Staff work in a highly collaborative way to ensure that assessment results are accurate. Teachers use this information to inform their planning, thus enabling pupils to make better progress.
- Teachers pay specific attention to developing the literacy skills of pupils. Expectations are high with respect to spelling, punctuation and grammar across all subjects. Pupils are expected to correct and practise spelling errors, particularly for specific subject terminology.
- Additional adult support is effectively deployed to ensure that pupils with SEND are well supported in their learning. They help to reshape learning activities and questions so that these pupils make better progress. In a Year 11 science lesson about the movement of substances, for example, the additional support was highly effective in leading the literacy development for a group of pupils with complex needs.
- Some of the teaching seen by inspectors was exceptionally strong. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, pupils worked with determination in response to their teacher's constant encouragement and precise intervention to reinforce the accuracy required to plot scatter graphs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils who met with inspectors reported that they feel safe in school. They recognise and value the support that is available to them. Pupils also appreciate the mixed-age tutor groups and the opportunity for pupils from different year groups to integrate. Most parents who responded to Ofsted's survey expressed the view that their child was happy at school and felt safe.
- Leaders have carefully considered the programme for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) within the school's citizenship curriculum. A wide range of topics is delivered appropriate to pupils' age range. Pupils are well informed about the potential risks to their well-being, such as substance abuse, online safety and knife crime.
- Leaders have prioritised pupils' mental and emotional health and well-being. They have ensured that pupils understand how they can access school and online counselling services to support issues regarding anxiety, for example. The proportion of curriculum time devoted to physical education has also been increased in support of pupils' physical and mental well-being.

- School records indicate that incidences of bullying are low. All pupils who spoke to inspectors reported that bullying is rare and expressed confidence in the ability of staff to handle any issues quickly and effectively. During the inspection, pupils attended an anti-bullying assembly which drew upon real examples to reinforce messages about the long-term impact of bullying and how the school supports pupils.
- Pupils benefit from a well-thought-out curriculum for careers education and guidance, which covers Years 7 to 11. This includes access to impartial careers information and guidance. Consequently, all pupils secure places in further education, employment or training appropriate to their needs and interests.
- Pupils have a good understanding of fundamental British values and this is exemplified in their conduct within and outside lesson time. The curriculum makes explicit links with these values. In Year 10, for example, pupils' understanding of tolerance and respect is reinforced through their learning of English literature.
- Leaders promote the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding effectively. These opportunities are promoted by numerous displays around the school site and in the school's 'Somercotes Standard' year book. The annual 'grandparents' day', organised with Year 7, provides a rich opportunity for social development within the community.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their conduct around the school is calm and orderly. Pupils wear their uniform smartly and with pride.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and helpful. They are punctual to lessons and follow instructions from staff promptly.
- Overall attendance has improved and is now broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has decreased dramatically. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who were regularly absent from school was very high in the past, but this has also decreased rapidly. Leaders have applied a range of decisive actions to improve attendance, including stronger engagement with parents, the effective deployment of the trust's education welfare officer, and through enforcement referrals to the local authority when necessary.
- The proportion of pupils receiving permanent or fixed-term exclusions has been high in the past, but this has reduced significantly. Levels of exclusion are now below the national average.
- Strategies to improve pupils' behaviour have been effective and staff consistently apply the school's new behaviour policy. This is reflected in school records which show a substantial decrease in the instances of low-level disruption across the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' overall attainment across a range of subjects was below that of other pupils nationally in 2018. The attainment of both disadvantaged pupils and the most able was weak overall. Having previously been in line with the national average in 2017, the proportion of pupils gaining a standard pass in both English and mathematics dropped

significantly in 2018. The proportion gaining a strong pass in these subjects has been low for at least two years.

- In 2018, the progress pupils made by the end of key stage 4 was significantly below average in several subject areas including English, mathematics and some optional subjects, including French. By contrast, the progress made by pupils in science in 2017 and 2018 was much stronger.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils nationally across a range of subjects, except for science.
- The school's overall progress scores are affected by the high number of pupils who join the school during the school year. Those pupils who remain on the school roll make good progress.
- Current pupils are making stronger progress than was previously the case, including in subjects in which pupils underperformed in 2018, such as mathematics and French. However, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher grades by the end of key stage 4, particularly by the most able pupils, requires improvement.
- Over the past year, school records indicate that progress has improved for current pupils in key stage 3. The introduction of a recently introduced target and assessment strategy has positively supported this. Disadvantaged pupils are also beginning to make better progress.
- Pupils with SEND are beginning to make better progress in key stages 3 and 4 than in previous years. This is due to the improving support and closer monitoring they receive.
- The funding that the school receives to help pupils in Year 7 catch up with their peers if they are behind in English and/or mathematics has been well allocated to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. As a result of the well-targeted support these pupils receive, there has been a clear improvement in their reading and spelling scores.
- Pupils are well-prepared for the future. They receive effective support and guidance to ensure that they understand the options available to them. All pupils have secured appropriate places in further education, employment or training and this has been the case for the past three years.

School details

Unique reference number	142392
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10053474

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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	366
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Philip Bond
Principal	Frances Green
Telephone number	01507 353459
Website	www.somercotesacademy.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@somercotesacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school is sponsored by the Tollbar Multi-Academy Trust Family of Academies and converted to academy status in November 2015.
- When its predecessor school, Birkbeck School and Community Arts College, was last inspected in February 2015, it was judged to be inadequate.
- The Tollbar Multi-Academy Trust has overall responsibility for the academy and has appointed a local governing body which oversees both Somercotes and Theddlethorpe academies.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding is higher than the national average.

- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school used no alternative provision at the time of the inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
- Inspectors observed 18 parts of lessons in a range of subjects. Inspectors also visited tutor time and an assembly.
- Inspectors spoke with four groups of pupils across all year groups and with pupils informally during the school day.
- Inspectors met with a range of school leaders, including the principal, and senior leaders responsible for teaching and learning and behaviour and personal development. Inspectors also spoke with the designated safeguarding leaders and with the coordinator for the provision of pupils with SEND. Inspectors also met with subject leaders and a selection of staff and the leader with oversight of the use of pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding. The lead inspector met with four members of the local governing body, which included the chair. The chair of the local governing body is also the chair of the directors of the Tollbar Multi-Academy Trust Family of Academies. A meeting was also held with the deputy chief executive officer of the trust.
- A range of documentation was examined, including the school's self-evaluation, the school business and improvement plans, pupils' performance information, behaviour logs, a range of school policies and the minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work across a broad range of curriculum subjects.
- The lead inspector evaluated the 31 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 16 responses to Ofsted's school staff survey. Five additional correspondences submitted by parents were also considered.

Inspection team

Chris Stevens, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christine Horrocks	Ofsted Inspector
Kate Beale	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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