

Sheffield Springs Academy

Hurlfield Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S12 2SF

Inspection dates

14–15 May 2019

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have improved the school substantially since the previous inspection. Morale among staff is high. Pupils agree that the school has improved. They are positive about the relationships between pupils and staff.
- Leaders have acted since the previous inspection to improve the breadth and balance of the curriculum. A wider range of subjects is taught and pupils' options for key stage 4 have increased.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved. Teachers have high aspirations for all pupils. Teachers' planning includes meeting the learning needs of those pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Pupils feel safe in school and safeguarding is effective. Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life beyond school through an effective programme for personal, social, health, careers and economics education.
- Pupils' rates of attendance are improving. This is despite the challenge presented by the substantial number of pupils joining the school during the year, many of whom have poor habits of attendance on arrival.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. Rates of fixed-term exclusion and permanent exclusion have fallen. Staff and pupils alike are unanimous that standards of behaviour are much improved.
- Pupils' progress over the previous two years is above the national average. However, beneath the headline figure, pupils' progress in a range of subjects, including English, has been well below the national average for several years. Current pupils are making much stronger progress as a result of improved teaching.
- While most pupils are keen to learn and improve their work, a few are passive in class and less engaged in their learning than the majority.
- Although the behaviour of the very large majority of pupils is consistently good, a 'hard core' of pupils do not conduct themselves to the same good standards.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve pupils' outcomes, especially in English and the humanities subjects, by:
 - ensuring that the current improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are fully embedded and maintained
 - continuing to support and challenge the few pupils who are passive in their learning, so that they become more consistently engaged and committed to improving their work.
- Continue to improve the rates of attendance of those pupils who have arrived in school during the year by continuing to work closely with them and their families.
- Continue to establish the consistently good standard of pupils' behaviour by:
 - improving the behaviour of a minority of pupils
 - ensuring that all staff follow the school's behaviour management policy with consistency across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have brought about a transformational change to the school since the previous inspection. Their ambition for what their pupils are entitled to achieve is high. This ambition is threaded through the life of the school. Leaders have made substantial improvements to teaching, behaviour and pupils' aspirations, in particular. Staff and pupils are in agreement that, since the previous inspection, the school is in a much better place as a result of leaders' actions.
- Supported by the trust, leaders have taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Since the previous inspection, a very large number of teachers have left the school, including most of the senior team. At times, this has necessitated the use of cover teachers and temporary appointments. To some extent, the scale of the change in the teaching staff has caused some gaps in pupils' knowledge. However, teaching is now good and improving, as is pupils' progress, as a result of leaders' actions. The school is fully staffed for the start of the next academic year.
- Morale among staff is high. All of the staff spoken to by inspectors were in agreement that the school is on an upwards trajectory. They point to much-improved pupil behaviour as a vital reason for this. They also believe that leaders' commitment to staff professional development through training pathways is an essential component of the school's improvement.
- Pupils are optimistic and positive about the improvements since the previous inspection. They told inspectors about the strength of the relationships between pupils and staff. They believe that these relationships are central to their improving outcomes.
- Leaders have made substantial changes to the curriculum since the previous inspection. Subjects which had dropped out of the curriculum, such as music and performing arts, have been reintroduced. A wider range of option subjects at key stage 4 have been made available. The proportion of pupils following the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects (English, mathematics, science, languages, history or geography) in Years 10 and 11 is growing.
- The extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to broaden their experiences have also been increased. Principally, these are delivered through the 'Springs promise' and the 'Springs challenge'. Pupils told inspectors about the wide range of sporting, cultural and artistic activities available to them through these programmes, such as the debating club. Additionally, teachers exploit opportunities, when they arise, to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. In English, for example, a book about a writer's experience of prison led to a discussion about the rights of individuals versus the needs of society.
- Leaders have a secure grip on the use of additional funding. Since the previous inspection, they have made improvements to the ways in which the pupil premium funding is used, with encouraging signs of its effectiveness. Year 7 catch-up funding is very effectively used in the support of pupils who need extra help with their reading

and writing. Pupils with SEND are very well supported by leaders' use of funding, with these pupils making strong progress.

Governance of the school

- Governors' ambition for the school is one of aspiration. They share the vision of leaders that pupils will be provided with a curriculum which will 'open the world up' to them. They support leaders with the means to achieve this, such as the effective use of school funding.
- Governors have a clear and balanced understanding of the school's strengths and relative weaknesses. They are effective in holding leaders to account for the performance of the school. Minutes of meetings and records of visits demonstrate that governors' grasp of how things are going is strong.
- There is a firm understanding among governors of their safeguarding responsibilities. A link governor for safeguarding meets regularly with the school's safeguarding leader and reports to the appropriate governors' committee.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A strong culture of safeguarding exists across the school. Staff have been trained in the necessary areas and know what to do should they be concerned about the welfare of any pupil. The checks on the staff who work in the school are carried out assiduously and meet legal requirements.
- The leaders with particular responsibility for safeguarding are tenacious in securing the correct support for pupils from the relevant external agencies. They ensure that the right support is accessed, for example from the local authority, so that pupils' safeguarding and welfare needs are met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Across a range of subjects and years, teachers set tasks which challenge pupils to do well. Typically, teachers' planning ensures that the needs of different groups of pupils are met, including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND.
- Pupils with SEND make strong progress as a consequence of effective teaching. The support they receive at 'The Bridge' provision in school is especially effective. The calm and purposeful environment, allied to good teaching, helps pupils to consolidate their learning and make good progress.
- Across the curriculum, teachers are adept at spotting when pupils are at risk of falling behind with their work. Teachers act quickly to fill any gaps in understanding or to clear up any misconceptions. This was evident during the inspection, for example in history and geography. The well-sequenced schemes of work ensure that pupils' grasp of new knowledge is developed in a logical way, with effective clarification of any misunderstanding along the way.

- Teachers have an expectation that pupils will want to learn and do well. Tasks set are typically challenging for pupils of different starting points, with appropriate support and guidance. In science, for example, the most able pupils are set work which stretches their understanding. For the least able pupils, teachers make effective use of activities to support these pupils in understanding challenging new ideas.
- Teachers make effective use of questioning to check that pupils have understood the learning. Typically, teachers' questions use pupils' knowledge of what they have learned previously to help them understand new knowledge and skills. It is not unusual for pupils to ask questions of teachers. This is because pupils are eager to check their own understanding and to be curious about what is coming next.
- Leaders have taken effective action to support pupils in their reading. Pupils confirm that they read regularly every week in school, using the well-resourced library. The pupils who need additional help with their reading are supported effectively. For example, leaders have put in place extra phonics teaching to quickly improve the reading skills of the weakest readers. As one pupil said about the extra reading support, 'School is fantastic. It has helped me so much.'
- Teachers have bought into leaders' vision that pupils will be exposed to concepts, ideas and knowledge which will broaden pupils' horizons. In English, for example, teachers use demanding texts drawn from the English literary heritage. In French, pupils learn to use the language through listening to examples of life in Sheffield beyond the immediate neighbourhood.
- Most pupils want to learn and improve. Most of the time, they want to find out new things and challenge themselves. On a few occasions, however, some pupils are passive. At these times, they do not show consistently strong attitudes to improving their own learning, despite teachers' positive attitudes. Leaders, however, are tireless in their determination to bring these pupils' attitudes to learning up to the standard of the large majority.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school's tolerant community. Pupils who spoke to inspectors believe that their school is welcoming to all, regardless of ethnicity, faith, culture or sexuality.
- Pupils have a pride in their school. They respect its environment, keeping it litter- and graffiti-free. The very large majority of pupils wear their uniform with pride, arrive on time to lessons and are prepared for work. Typically, pupils want to learn and do well. They want and expect their teachers to explain to them how to improve and to set them work which is challenging.
- Leaders have introduced the 'Springs promise' and the 'Springs challenge' to nurture pupils' awareness of life beyond school and the responsibilities of being a productive citizen. Pupils were keen to talk to inspectors about the blazer badges they have earned for participation in these programmes, such as overseas trips, residential visits

and artistic, cultural and sporting activities. Pupils told inspectors about the leadership opportunities available to them, such as becoming anti-bullying ambassadors.

- Leaders have taken action to ensure that instances of bullying are rare and, when they happen, are dealt with effectively. Pupils agreed, telling inspectors that there is little or no bullying. They are confident that when it happens it is sorted out quickly. All of the pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they knew an adult in school whom they could tell if they were worried about anything, including bullying.
- All of the pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe in school. They can describe the ways in which school has taught them about keeping safe, such as online safety, the risks of drugs and alcohol and the dangers of crime.
- Leaders have recently overhauled their programme of careers education, information, advice and guidance. It is a work in progress, but it has been mapped out with care and with appropriate reference to national standards for careers guidance.
- Leaders ensure that the personal development and welfare of the small number of pupils attending alternative educational provision are supported effectively. Typically, the provision nurtures pupils' personal development. Leaders monitor the activities being undertaken and check the extent to which any gaps in pupils' knowledge are addressed.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- There is a calmness which permeates the school. Inspectors heard no raised voices in classrooms, on corridors or around the site at social times. Pupils spoke warmly about the quality of relationships between pupils and the adults who work in the school. This underpins the respectful manner in which members of the school community behave towards one another.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons means that teachers can get on and teach, and pupils can learn. Inspectors saw little low-level disruption of lessons throughout the inspection. At breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils conducted themselves in a cordial and sensible way. Pupils and staff are unanimous in their recognition that standards of behaviour have been transformed since the previous inspection. As one member of staff said, the standard of behaviour is 'a million miles away from where it was'.
- Rates of fixed-term exclusion have reduced substantially since the previous inspection. There have been far fewer fixed-term exclusions this year compared to the same period of time last year. Pupils with the highest rate of repeat exclusion last year have been excluded markedly less, if at all, this year. The rate of permanent exclusion has fallen from concerningly high levels two years ago to currently being in line with the national average.
- Leaders have acted effectively to improve rates of attendance. Their work is made all the more challenging because of the high rate of pupils joining the school through in-year transfers. The school receives more pupils than leave to go elsewhere. Of the pupils joining the school, many have complex needs and, often, poor attendance. Against this backdrop, the fact that that leaders have established a rate of attendance

which is improving strongly towards the national average for similar schools is commendable.

- While the behaviour of the very large majority of pupils is consistently good, a small 'hard core' of pupils continue to challenge the school's ethos and expectations. Leaders are working hard with these pupils to bring about improvements in their conduct. On a very few occasions, there is some inconsistency in the extent to which a small number of teachers apply the school's behaviour system.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The overall rate of progress made by pupils at the end of Year 11 for the previous two years has been above the national average. However, pupils' performance in two vocational option subjects has masked some underachievement in a range of other subjects.
- Pupils' progress in English and the humanities subjects has been significantly below the national averages for three years.
- Pupils' progress in science in 2017/18 was in line with the national average, having been above the national average in 2016/17. In mathematics, pupils' progress has been average for the previous two years.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress was in line with the national average for other pupils overall in 2017/18. In English, mathematics and the humanities subjects, however, it was significantly below the national average for other pupils.
- Pupils currently in the school are making stronger progress, overall. However, the substantial changes in staffing since the previous inspection have led to some gaps in pupils' learning. Effective teaching is ensuring that these gaps are being filled, but the gaps are limiting the strength of pupils' progress in a range of subjects.
- Effective teaching is supporting pupils in making gains in their learning in subjects where recent outcomes have not been good. This is especially the case in English, for example. While there is still some inconsistency, inspectors also saw improving progress in science, history and geography.
- Leaders' actions to prepare pupils for the next steps in their education, training and employment are effective. In 2017/18, the proportion of pupils progressing to an appropriate destination was above the national average.

School details

Unique reference number	131896
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10087551

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

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	701
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr N MacDonald
Headteacher	Mr Mark Shipman
Telephone number	0114 239 2631
Website	www.sheffieldsprings-academy.org/
Email address	enquiries@sheffieldsprings.org
Date of previous inspection	19 October 2016

Information about this school

- The school is part of the United Learning Trust, which it joined on 1 September 2006. The trustees of the United Learning Trust hold responsibility for the performance of the school. Some delegated authority rests with the local governing body.
- There has been a substantial amount of change in staffing since the previous inspection. The executive principal and the trust regional director with responsibility for the school took up their roles just before the previous inspection. The headteacher was appointed in March 2017. Most of the senior team took up their roles following the headteacher's appointment. Since the previous inspection, 67 staff have left the school.
- The pupils attending the school are predominantly of White British heritage.
- The school serves an area of disadvantage which is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is in the top 20% of schools nationally.

- The school has links with two providers of alternative education: Heeley City Farm and The Meadows.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a range of lessons across subjects and years, sometimes accompanied by senior leaders. During these visits, inspectors talked to pupils and looked in their books.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work across several subjects, with different year groups and pupil abilities represented.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and the executive headteacher. An inspector met with the trust regional director. A meeting was held with members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors met senior leaders with responsibility for: attendance; behaviour; SEND; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; careers education, information advice and guidance; personal, social, health, careers and economics education; literacy; the pupil premium and Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding; the curriculum; and safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with four groups of pupils drawn from across year groups and including pupils with SEND. Inspectors also spoke informally with pupils around the site at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, on corridors, in social spaces such as the dining room and outside spaces and at the end of the day when pupils were leaving the school site.
- Inspectors visited the school's internal resource bases for supporting its more vulnerable pupils, as well as those who have not adhered to the school's behaviour policy. Such internal bases include 'The Bridge'.
- An inspector listened to some pupils in Years 7 and 8 read.
- An inspector met with the executive headteacher of two local 'feeder' primary schools.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone to the providers of alternative education used by the school.
- A wide range of documentation was examined. This includes leaders' self-evaluation and plans, minutes of the trust board and academy council meetings, attendance, behaviour and exclusion information and pupils' progress information. Leaders' processes for vetting adults' suitability to work in school were checked, along with safeguarding files.
- Consideration was given to the 16 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, together with 17 free text responses. The 52 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Steve Shaw, lead inspector	Her Majesty's 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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