

Sheffield Springs Academy

Hurlfield Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S12 2SF

Inspection dates

18–19 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at the previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

- Leadership and management are not yet good because leaders have not secured consistently good teaching, pupils' outcomes or behaviour.
- Although improving, pupils' achievements by the end of Year 11 remain below average. The progress pupils make from their well below average starting points is not yet good, particularly for the most able and disadvantaged pupils in Year 11.
- Recent improvements to the quality of teaching have not had time to impact fully, especially in tackling the history of underachievement of older pupils. A few teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do.
- Occasionally, gaps in pupils' scientific or mathematical knowledge are not identified quickly enough, so they struggle with concepts that they do not understand.
- Some teachers do not use the information they now have about pupils' abilities to plan learning that moves them on quickly. This means that the most able pupils are not always sufficiently stretched. Teachers do not challenge the most able often enough to read more demanding texts when choosing books.
- Pupils report positively about improvements in behaviour. However, not all staff and pupils take their share of the responsibility in adhering to the school's behaviour management policy. In a few lessons, the misbehaviour or unsuitable language of a small number of pupils is not tackled in line with the policy's stepped approach.

The school has the following strengths

- The principal's appointment in January 2016 and the executive headteacher's arrival in April have strengthened leadership. Leaders and governors have left no stone unturned in identifying and then tackling weaknesses. Pupils and most staff welcome the changes and tangible improvements. It is too early to see their full impact.
- Improved teaching and better use of funding for disadvantaged pupils are helping to tackle differences between their rates of progress and those of other pupils effectively.
- Recent strategies to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are hastening their rates of progress well.
- Leaders are tackling robustly historic negative attitudes of some pupils and families where school is not valued and absence condoned. Consequently, attendance rates, although below average, are improving rapidly this term.
- High-quality transition work with primary schools ensures that pupils now settle quickly into school life.
- Pupils are safe. Partnership working between the school's safeguarding team and the local authority's multi-agency support team (MAST) is strong. This ensures that pupils at risk or facing challenges in their lives are identified and supported as soon as concerns arise and before things can take a turn for the worse.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further in order to hasten pupils' progress and achievements across the curriculum by ensuring that teachers:
 - have consistently high expectations of what their pupils can do, including the type of books and texts the most able should read for pleasure or for study
 - use the information they have about pupils' previous learning to plan for and provide stimulating activities that are set at the right level and move pupils on briskly from their starting points, particularly the most able
 - identify gaps in pupils' learning quickly and take steps to tackle these before moving onto more complex concepts in science and mathematics
 - check frequently any misconceptions pupils may have about their work so that these can be identified and tackled quickly
 - continue to have opportunities to learn and develop their skills from the good practice within the school and that within the sister school.

- Ensure that the behaviour management policy is consistently applied so that all staff and pupils play their part in improving behaviour and attitudes in lessons where behaviour is still not good enough.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Changes put in place by new senior leaders have not had time to impact fully. Consequently, although improving, teaching is not yet good and pupils' outcomes and behaviour require improvement. Improvements begun upon the principal's appointment in January 2016 have accelerated since the arrival of the executive principal, an outstanding leader, in April. He has a track record of driving improvement successfully in the trust's sister school, Sheffield Park Academy (Park). Key staff from Park now work in partnership with staff in 'Springs'.
- Changes have been made to leadership, teaching, assessment, behaviour management and the curriculum. These changes alongside the sharing of expertise from Park are effectively driving improvements in the quality of teaching, pupils' progress and achievements and in pupils' behaviour and attendance. Leaders accept that it is too soon to see their full impact. They know there is still more to do to succeed in their ambitions to 'achieve excellence' and, 'achieve the best for ourselves and others'.
- Leaders and governors have a very accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is because they have reviewed every aspect of the school's work robustly. Improvement plans are being delivered, with challenging targets that are checked regularly and rigorously.
- When things are not working well enough, leaders change them. This can be seen in actions taken to improve the quality of teaching across the school. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) identified that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were not doing as well as they should. Leaders have changed how pupils are supported and how teachers are challenged, to ensure that pupils' needs are better met. As a result, special educational needs funding is having a greater impact. Current assessment information shows the progress these pupils make in most classes is at least similar to their peers and sometimes greater.
- Improved arrangements to manage the performance of staff have resulted in time-limited support, coaching and training to improve the quality of their teaching and to tackle any weaknesses. Leaders take decisive action should improvement not result. There has been significant change in staff since the previous inspection. Recruitment of specialist staff remains a challenge for leaders. However, the additional capacity provided by the sister school's specialists is helping to minimise difficulties.
- Middle leaders and the majority of staff embrace fully the school's drive to improve and the changes being embedded. They speak convincingly of how they are held to account more robustly for their work and the support provided to improve their practice. Middle leaders are enthusiastic and relish their increased involvement as well as the support from expert staff from Park. Newly qualified teachers report highly on the support and advice provided to help them develop their teaching skills further and their skills in managing the behaviour of pupils.
- An improved focus on learning and progress in key stage 3, strong transitions from primary schools, and better targeting of the government's additional Year 7 catch-up funding are paying dividends this year. Current Year 7 pupils have settled in quickly and their rates of progress are already among the strongest in the school.
- Leaders have broadened the curriculum to enable pupils to follow academic and

vocational qualifications. The curriculum is enriched by an extensive range of after-school activities, with something to offer to everyone. These include many sports, performing arts, business and enterprise activities and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Regular Saturday clubs provide more learning time across the curriculum.

- Leaders have ensured that teaching of the qualities pupils need to be successful and active citizens in modern Britain has been embedded across the curriculum, assemblies and tutor time. Pupils learn about values such as respect, trust and democracy and to value the diversity of religions and cultures within the school and beyond.
- Equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are at the heart of the school's work and Christian ethos. Every effort is made to include all pupils and to support them to take part in all the school has to offer. In spring 2016, the pupils attending alternative education provision were brought back to the school. This has been a challenge as some display complex behaviours and attitudes. Individual learning programmes are tackling barriers effectively. However, because of the variation in the achievements of the most able, and the poor attitudes or derogatory language that a few pupils continue to display, this aspect of the school's work requires improvement.
- United Learning Trust has provided increased support and challenge. This has contributed to the improvements seen currently in the school. It includes the appointment of the executive principal, expertise from mathematics and English specialists in the teaching school alliance and from the regional director.

Governance of the school

- Trustees and governors took decisive action to hasten improvements following the monitoring inspection in April, by securing the joint working with Park. The addition of an executive governing body has provided an extra level of accountability and challenge to leaders.
- Governors' mix of skills is well used. Minutes of governing body meetings and discussions with governors identify their strong understanding of the school's work and the challenge they provide to leaders in checking the difference leaders' actions make. Regular reports on pupils' progress mean that governors know exactly how well pupils and groups of pupils are achieving.
- Governors challenge areas of concern. For example, reports show their focus on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and the impact of pupil premium funding. Governors have ensured that changes have been made to the use of this resource to make sure differences in these pupils' achievements and other pupils nationally are diminishing quickly. Governors pay close attention to the way that teachers' performance is linked to pay progression and the action taken when performance is not good enough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. In spring 2016, leaders conducted a full safeguarding audit and quickly put in place an action plan to tackle weaknesses. As a result, the school meets statutory requirements. Leaders are working to become a beacon of good practice. The local authority regards joint working with the Sheffield MAST highly. It is helping to tackle concerns about pupils' safety and welfare quickly, in a coordinated, multi-agency way. All staff are trained well in child protection. They have a good knowledge of the risks to pupils' safety in their local communities, including from social media, child sexual exploitation, extremism and domestic violence. They know how to identify and respond to such concerns and take action accordingly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is improving but it remains inconsistent across the school and across subjects. As a result, the progress pupils make from their starting points is not consistent. Teachers' subject knowledge is not always strong enough, particularly in some science and mathematics lessons. Teachers do not check first whether pupils know the basic skills and concepts before moving on to complex work. Pupils' misconceptions or misunderstandings continue when teachers do not pick errors up.
- Teachers have embraced the school's pupil-assessment, marking and feedback and lesson-planning policies. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and more teachers are using this information to plan activities to move pupils on quickly from their starting points. However, not all teachers are accomplished yet in ensuring that activities stretch the most able pupils sufficiently. Sometimes, these pupils have harder activities planned that require deeper thinking, but then have to complete easier work first. This slows down their rates of progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are usually positive. Most come to class ready to learn and apply themselves. There remains a small group of pupils, mainly boys, whose attitudes to learning are poor and whose misbehaviour delays the start or parts of lessons.
- Where teaching is at its best, teachers' strong subject knowledge and good behaviour management skills help pupils to learn well. Where learning is stronger, teachers use a wide range of techniques to help pupils expand and challenge their own thinking and learning. This was seen clearly in a Year 9 drama lesson. The teacher's high expectations and skilful dramatisation of a play enabled pupils to develop their understanding of the playwright's intentions with enthusiasm and maturity.
- Reading is taught regularly and this is helping to improve pupils' skills and confidence. Pupils who find reading difficult are identified quickly and supported in the 'Bridge' for short, intensive activities, to catch up to a level where they can return to their classrooms. The learning resource centre (library) has a wide range of books that pupils are encouraged to read. However, not enough is done to ensure that the most able readers are challenged to choose texts that are more demanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Adults support pupils well to develop their skills, self-confidence, resilience and the personal qualities they will need as they move towards adult-hood. However, despite strong endeavours, a few pupils' attitudes to learning and the school, and respect for each other and adults are not yet good enough.
- Pupils report that there is little bullying or derogatory language in the school. They say any incidents are tackled quickly and well. Bullying logs indicate that incidents are recorded in detail and leaders' responses are robust. However, it is clear from the logs, observations and discussions that a small number of pupils continue to misbehave and use derogatory language. Leaders are to take action to stamp out such occurrences.
- Pupils report that they feel safe and well supported in times of need from any adult. Older pupils report that the atmosphere and expectations in the school have improved

well since they were in Year 7. They report on the range of actions leaders have taken to ensure that they are safe and to help them be safe in their community. Assemblies, the curriculum and tutor time are used to inform and promote key messages. For example, the assembly during the inspection pulled no punches in alerting pupils to the risks of social media, sexting and the support they can call on should they have concerns.

- The curriculum has been improved to broaden pupils' horizons and promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Themes such as tolerance, respect and valuing differences are embedded in the school's work. Celebrations of cultures to which pupils belong, study of world religions and celebrations of major religious festivals, including Christmas, promote their understanding of cultures and beliefs different to their own. The wide range of charity work pupils undertake helps to develop their sense of worth and belonging to the local and wider community.
- Leaders have improved the way they work with the local authority's MAST, embracing the good practice already in Park. This is ensuring early, timely support from a broad range of services to families and pupils facing challenging circumstances, for pupils at risk of not attending, going missing, being excluded or being unsafe at home. The MAST coordinator speaks highly of the significant contribution of leaders and the difference this work is making to pupils' safety, care and attendance.
- Pupils value the range of responsibilities they have to contribute to the life of the school, for example as counsellors and 'student ambassadors'. This is helping to develop the qualities they will need to be successful members of their communities. The improved curriculum and greater range of independent careers advice and guidance is ensuring that a high proportion of pupils are moving on to their chosen destinations, whether it is training, further education or employment.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. The new behaviour policy implemented after Easter 2016, has a 'stepped' approach to rewards and sanctions with clear guidelines in all classes. Pupils welcome this more consistent approach and say that behaviour has improved significantly as a result. However, leaders know that the behaviour and attitudes of a small number of pupils are still not good enough.
- The majority of pupils behave well, are friendly and respectful. They are hard-working and want to succeed. Behaviour at break, lunchtimes and in the dining hall is cordial and pupils get along with each other well. Lessons are usually calm and purposeful with pupils ready to contribute. Leaders are working with staff and pupils to tackle the poor behaviour and attitudes of the small proportion of pupils who continue to resist the higher expectations of behaviour and conduct in the school. Improvement in behaviour is reflected in the reducing proportion of pupils who are excluded for short periods. Although the proportion remains above average, it has reduced rapidly this term as the behaviour strategy becomes more embedded.
- Although it is still early days, and attendance rates remain below average, rates so far this term are nearly a percentage point higher than that found at the same time last year. Persistent absence rates have likewise dropped by a fifth over the same period.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes are not good, because over time, pupils do not make the same levels of progress from their starting points as other pupils nationally in a range of subjects, particularly the most able. The progress that disadvantaged Year 11 pupils make compared to other pupils nationally is too varied. Provisional 2016 performance information indicates that the differences in achievements are diminishing in mathematics but not as successfully in English. Pupils who entered the school with low prior attainment in Year 7 made similar progress to comparable pupils nationally by the end of Year 11.
- Although outcomes are still below average, actions taken by leaders have resulted in a diminishing of the differences between the achievements of pupils in Springs and other pupils nationally in 2016 across all performance indicators. For example, the proportion of pupils gaining a GCSE at grade A to C in English moved from around one third in 2015 to one half in 2016. There was a 10% point improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining a similar qualification in mathematics.
- Significant changes to the curriculum as well as improvements to the quality of teaching are making their mark, particularly this term. Improved processes to assess pupils' achievements across the curriculum are leading to teachers' better understanding of pupils' starting points. This is helping them to set ambitious targets for improvement and plan the steps pupils will need to take to achieve them. As a result, there is a higher level of expectation of the work pupils will carry out and what they can achieve.
- Evidence from pupils' books, observations of learning and the school's assessment information show that actions taken by leaders are hastening rates of pupils' progress across the school. This is particularly the case in Year 7 and Year 8. Already three quarters of pupils in Year 7 are on track to achieve their challenging end-of-year targets in English, mathematics and science. However, evidence also shows that there are still occasions where pupils' progress in lessons is not good enough, particularly when lessons are disrupted by the low-level behaviour of a few pupils, or when teachers' expectations are not sufficiently high.
- Pupils' progress in modern foreign languages is hastening well because of the strong improvement in leadership of that subject. Leaders know there is still too much variation in the progress pupils make in science and in humanities subjects such as geography. They are taking robust action to tackle these weaknesses.
- Leaders recognise that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities did not make the progress that they should have last year. They have taken action to tackle this. The SENCo provides all teachers with detailed information about each pupil's specific needs so that they can adapt learning in the classroom to meet those needs.
- The development of the 'Bridge' helps pupils to work in small groups to tackle gaps in their knowledge and skills. Pupils report how much this is helping them and giving them the confidence to 'have a go'. Improvements put in place are starting to have an impact. Current assessments show that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disability are making generally good progress in lessons, and often at a faster rate than their peers.

School details

Unique reference number	131896
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10019746

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	692
Appropriate authority	United Learning
Chair	Mr M Stephens
Principal	Mr L Morritt
Telephone number	01142 392631
Website	www.sheffieldsprings-academy.org
Email address	enquiries@sheffieldsprings.org
Date of previous inspection	30 September – 1 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with DfE guidance on what academies should publish.
- Sheffield Springs is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. The number on roll has fallen year on year since 2013. It is sponsored by United Learning Trust. Staff and pupils refer to the school as 'Springs'.
- Just over half the pupils are known to be entitled to the government's additional funding called the pupil premium.
- The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage is slightly below average and increasing.
- An above-average proportion of pupils have been identified as requiring additional support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities. An average proportion have an education, health and care plan.
- In 2015, the school met the government's floor standards, which set out the minimum

expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11. Provisional information suggests it is likely to meet the new floor standards in 2016.

- The school's sixth-form provision was suspended this year. Consultation is taking place to determine the nature of provision from September 2017.
- The school does not use any alternative education providers. In summer 2016, all pupils who had used such provision now attend the school full time.
- The Bridge is a new unit within the school that provides intensive support for pupils who find learning difficult. Pupils spend time in small group work for around a term to help them develop the skills needed to access their learning back in their main classes.
- A new principal was appointed in January 2016. Since the last monitoring inspection by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors in April 2016, a new executive principal has been appointed. Since that time, the school has developed partnership working with a sister school, Sheffield Park Academy. Staff and pupils refer to the sister school as 'Park'.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the school. Inspectors visited a number of lessons jointly with the senior leaders. Inspectors reviewed pupils' workbooks during lessons. They also heard a number of pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the principal and executive principal, senior and middle leaders and a group of staff. Inspectors also met with United Learning Trust's regional director. The lead inspector held a telephone conference with three representatives of the local governing body and executive governing body.
- Separate telephone discussions were held with a headteacher from a local primary school and a lead officer from Sheffield's MAST.
- Inspectors spoke informally to pupils in lessons and around the school over the two days of the inspection. They also spoke formally to five groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the comments made by four parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. They took account of the views of 10 staff who completed the staff questionnaire and 19 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- A range of documents were reviewed. These included key safeguarding documents, the school's evaluation of its work and improvement plan. Reports to the governing body, assessment information about Year 11 outcomes last year and assessments of the progress and learning of classes and groups of pupils across the school.

Inspection team

Margaret Farrow, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nick Horn	Ofsted Inspector
Lee Elliott	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Powell	Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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