

John Spendluffe Foundation Technology College

Hanby Lane, Alford, LN13 9BL

Inspection dates

17–18 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has at its heart the highest aspirations for all its students, in both their academic progress and wider preparation for adult life.
- This results in a happy, warm and respectful atmosphere in which students' many successes are celebrated.
- Teaching is mostly good, with some that is outstanding. Students are attentive and willing learners, so lessons are productive.
- Lessons are well planned, because individuals are well known to adults and their particular needs are quickly identified and met.
- Students are well supported in their reading. Literacy and numeracy skills are given a strong emphasis across all subjects, helping to remove potential obstacles to learning.
- Students conduct themselves calmly and safely around the site. They enjoy all that the school offers, including a wide range of activities, trips and visits.
- The standards reached by students have increased over time. In 2013 they reached average levels from low starting points, which represent good achievement.
- Students are confident that adults will deal quickly with any difficulties that arise, including very occasional bullying or disagreements.
- The school is well led. Leaders, managers and governors work very effectively in cooperation, sharing responsibility for improving teaching and achievement.
- They seek every opportunity to improve the buildings, facilities and experiences offered to students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough lessons are outstanding in providing a strong pace, challenge and opportunities for independent learning, particularly for the most able.
- Attendance, although improving quickly, remains below the national average for secondary schools.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 26 lessons taught by 26 different teachers. They also made some shorter visits to some classrooms to look at reading and group support sessions.
- The team observed tutor periods and visited many different areas of the school and the site during lessons and at break times.
- Meetings were held with three different groups of students, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, senior staff, and subject and house leaders.
- The inspection team examined a range of school documentation, including school development plans and policies, lesson plans, records of lesson monitoring and checks on students' work, and the minutes of meetings, including those of the governing body. Inspectors examined a range of data, both that available to the public and that used by the school to monitor current rates of students' progress and attendance.
- There had been 21 responses made to the online questionnaire Parent View by the end of the inspection. These were considered, alongside with staff questionnaires and surveys of parents and carers carried out by the school.

Inspection team

David Martin, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Douglas Folan	Additional Inspector
Maggie Booth	Additional Inspector
Renee Robinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average non-selective secondary school in a selective area. It converted to become an academy in September 2011.
- When its predecessor school, also known as John Spendluffe Foundation Technology College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, extra government funding to narrow gaps in achievement by students eligible for free school meals and looked-after children among others, is higher than average.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is higher than average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also higher than average.
- The school meets government floor standards, by which minimum expectations are set for secondary schools.
- No students currently on roll attend other centres for part of their education.
- The headteacher takes leadership roles within local school networks, and various staff have shared good practice with other schools in the area.
- The school holds the Artsmark Silver, Healthy Schools status and International Schools award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all lessons have the pace, challenge and high expectations seen in the very best in the school, particularly for the more able
 - providing increased opportunities for students to be able to take responsibility for their own learning in the classroom.
- Ensure that attendance continues to improve at least to the national average, by:
 - further securing successful developments in checking patterns of absence and making early contact with parents and carers
 - extending the partnership work with some parents and carers to make sure that students who are absent more frequently are helped to benefit from the good education that the school offers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students develop a good range of skills and knowledge across the school. A strong focus on developing literacy skills in all subjects has been a major factor in the impressive improvement in attainment since the academy was formed.
- The extensive reading programme that begins at the start of Year 7, both in class and through small group and individual support, has had a very strong impact on raising reading ages, enabling students to read confidently in all subjects.
- Students also display good numeracy skills and attainment in mathematics has improved strongly. The emphasis on learning thinking skills leads to very positive attitudes to learning in all subjects. These initiatives show a good use of Year 7 catch-up funding.
- Some students have been entered early for mathematics GCSE in the winter term of Year 11, although many are re-entered in the summer if they do not reach or exceed their target grades. This does not limit the more able from reaching their potential grades.
- The progress made from low starting points has accelerated over time. Many students made expected levels of progress in English and mathematics in 2012. The 2013 results show a leap forward in attainment and progress, although the most able could still make better progress.
- The English results in the summer of 2012 were disappointing, and lower than expected. The school successfully entered 24 students for the special opportunity to retake the examination in November. Almost all were successful in gaining a C grade pass.
- The school quickly identifies the particular support required by disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Effective extra help from the learning support team, and good information held by all class teachers means that these students are able to make at least the same progress as other students.
- Students who are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium also make good progress. By the time they leave school, these students are only half a grade on average behind other students overall, and significantly less than that in English. Their progress is sometimes even more rapid than that of other students because of a good range of well-targeted support.

The quality of teaching is good

- School records indicate that the great majority of the teaching in the school is consistently good. Inspectors agree with these findings, and did see a minority of lessons where teaching and learning were outstanding. No teaching was inadequate or required improvement.
- Lessons are typically well-planned, and relationships are very strong. Students are keen to engage, and learning proceeds at a good pace. Students make strong gains in skills, knowledge and understanding in all subjects. Work seen in books is well presented and detailed.
- Planning is very thorough, with a variety of learning activities that engage and interest students. Assessment is used well to help students to understand what is expected and how well they are doing. There are many opportunities for them to assess their own and others' work.

- Marking is thorough, and students know what their targets are and how to achieve them. This is reinforced strongly in tutor time and in subject lessons. Some helpful, constructive comments are given, although the systems used are not totally consistent across the school.
- Teachers have detailed information about individual students, and use this well to cater for the needs of different abilities, particularly those who may find learning more difficult. Most students as a result have work of a suitable level and can make good progress in their learning.
- Teachers use questioning well to involve all students. They target questions skilfully so that all can enjoy success, often giving time for thinking or brief discussion. Opportunities are taken for students to build on each others' ideas and extend their initial responses.
- In the best lessons, the more able have extension activities and expectations of what they can achieve are very high. This was not seen in all lessons, where opportunities were occasionally missed to move some students on more quickly to more demanding tasks.
- Few examples were seen of students being required to work independently of the teacher for parts of the lesson, and to take greater responsibility for their own learning. However, students work well together to discuss and complete tasks when given the opportunity.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is consistently very well managed to a clear school policy that has high expectations of conduct. As a result, students develop excellent attitudes to learning, which have a positive impact on their achievement.
- Tutors and other key adults know the students well as individuals, and provide an excellent quality of care and guidance. Students report that there is always an adult that they can get help from if they have any personal or work issues.
- Students are respectful towards each other and adults and conduct themselves very safely and sensibly on the site. There is an active school council who gave inspectors examples of how well their opinions are listened to, and how they have contributed to improving the school.
- The vertical tutor system enables many older students to support and help younger ones, for example helping them to set their own learning targets. Year 7 students reported that they were helped to settle in quickly and that other students are kind and welcoming.
- Different types of bullying such as cyber- and prejudice-based discrimination are well understood. Students say that bullying incidents are rare and feel confident that adults deal with any issues quickly. Parental responses support this view, and that students are safe and happy.
- Attendance is improving quickly as school initiatives are having an impact. However, attendance remains below average overall, and for those more regularly absent from school. The school recognises that current efforts need to be sustained with the support of parents and carers.
- The school records absence, punctuality and any behavioural problems rigorously. Fixed-term exclusions are below average. The school works very effectively with students whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable or who present more challenging problems.

- Behaviour and safety are not outstanding because there are too few opportunities for students to manage their own behaviour in lessons when working without the direct guidance of a teacher or other adult.

The leadership and management are good

- Governors, leaders and managers are ambitious for the academic and personal development of every student, and determined to overcome barriers to success. This is seen across the school in literacy work, especially reading, and the wide range of opportunities available to all.
- A great deal of work is done to celebrate student success and build confidence within a harmonious school community. Any discrimination, harassment or poor behaviour is robustly challenged, so that students are confident that they are able to learn without distraction.
- A key feature of the school is that leaders and managers at all levels accept responsibility for student success through improving teaching and learning. This is seen in the consistent application of school policy by subject leaders, house leaders and other key staff.
- Senior leaders monitor and evaluate the school thoroughly, and their self-evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement is very accurate. Plans to improve the school are clear and well explained, with a suitable number of appropriate key objectives and activities.
- Lesson observation findings, reviews of teacher performance and regular sampling of lessons by senior staff all feed into highly targeted staff training. This is one of the main reasons that teaching has become so consistently good.
- The teaching and learning group and subject leaders group are crucial in sharing good practice. The school also has detailed data about student progress which is used in lessons and checked regularly by senior staff, so that any underperformance is quickly identified and support given.
- Various groups of students have been identified for additional support. As a result, gaps in performance are closing quickly. The school tracks the support that is provided to those eligible for pupil premium funding to ensure that their needs are met.
- The curriculum is highly tailored to the different needs of students. Recent changes to shorten Key Stage 3 have given Year 9 students the opportunity to study some subjects in greater depth. Students receive good, independent advice on future choices for when they leave school.
- The school plays a prominent role in the local area and is outward looking, for example in seeking to share its facilities with the community. Student opportunities are enhanced and enriched by an extensive range of activities, trips, visits and visitors.
- Students are very well prepared for life in modern British society, despite the school's remote, coastal location. The school has built strong links and partnerships locally, nationally and internationally to broaden students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Leadership and management are not outstanding because the achievement of pupils, though improving quickly, has not been maintained at a high level over a period of time, and a small number of more-able students are still not achieving their full potential.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are well informed about all aspects of the school's work, including pupil premium funding and student progress and attainment. They gather first-hand information from regular visits and seek professional support from experienced consultants when required.
- Governors understand that the quality of teaching in the school has improved due to the recruitment of skilled teachers and managers. As other staff have left the school, governors have changed responsibilities to reflect the way that the school is developing, for example the creation of a house system.
- Governors have reviewed performance management arrangements, and they meet Teachers Standards and all regulations. They know that staff have clear teaching and student progress targets that they must meet in order to progress through the pay structure.
- Governors have checked that support is put in place for staff whose performance has been found to need improving. Several staff have had their roles and responsibilities adjusted, and some staff have had their efforts rewarded by additional responsibility and promotion.
- The Governors have sharpened their own skills by undertaking Governor Quality Mark accreditation. This is further increasing their awareness of their roles, responsibilities and need for on-going training.
- Governors have successfully sought additional funding, and have used this to improve the site and facilities, often to the additional benefit of the local community.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136968
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	412878

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	567
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Milson
Headteacher	Steven Beverley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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