

Nottingham University Samworth Academy

Bramhall Road, Bilborough, Nottingham, NG8 4HY

Inspection dates	20–21 October 2015
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	Require improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Although the proportion of pupils making expected progress in mathematics is improving quickly, too few make more than the expected progress.
- Not enough pupils make good progress in science and achieve the qualifications they should.
- Teachers do not always provide the right degree of challenge for pupils, especially the most able.
- Subject leaders do not ensure that all teachers follow departmental policies so, for example, the feedback provided to pupils is inconsistent.
- Although attendance is improving term by term, the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent is too high, including in the sixth form.
- Rates of exclusions are reducing but remain high compared to national averages.
- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum sufficiently supports pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; neither are tutor sessions always used effectively in this respect.
- Not enough pupils in the sixth form are successful in their GCSE or equivalent resit examinations in mathematics and English.

The school has the following strengths

- The head of school, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders have transformed the culture and aspirations of the academy; there is increasing evidence of impact of their actions in pupils’ achievement and behaviour and in the quality of teaching.
- Achievement in English is consistently good.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress.
- Vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils are well supported and cared for.
- Pupils’ conduct, manners and attitudes towards one another are usually respectful.
- Partners and sponsors have enhanced the quality of the curriculum, teaching and continuous professional development across the academy.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in Years 7–11 by:
 - improving the range and precision of teaching strategies used to meet pupils' needs across the range of ability
 - having higher expectations of what pupils can and should achieve, especially in relation to the most able
 - providing accurate and meaningful feedback to pupils which makes a difference to their learning and understanding.
- Ensure that pupils make fast enough progress to achieve the grades they should in mathematics and science by:
 - preparing pupils well for examinations through regular, realistic practice and revision
 - ensuring that pupils' basic mathematical skills are mastered from Year 7 onwards
 - entering pupils for appropriate science courses according to their ability; and improving teachers' understanding of syllabus content and assessment criteria
 - supporting new leaders and teachers in science to promote consistently high standards across the department.
- Improve rates of attendance, particularly those of persistent absentees, by strengthening those strategies that are proving to be successful so that attendance levels reach at least national averages.
- Reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions further by supporting pupils at risk earlier.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring subject and pastoral leaders check the quality of teaching and the consistent application of academy and departmental policies more systematically and effectively
 - broadening the academy's curriculum to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
 - providing high-quality teaching and support in the sixth form to enable pupils to achieve well in GCSE or equivalent results in both English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- Some subject leaders do not check that established policies and procedures are followed consistently. For example, despite their checks on pupils' workbooks, too many are still poorly presented; and teachers' feedback is not always helpful and acted upon by pupils, as required.
- Similarly, while pastoral leaders are improving their leadership skills, they are insufficiently rigorous in checking that tutors in the main school are carrying out their duties consistently well. Consequently, pupils' experiences of tutor sessions are variable; some say they do very little.
- Academy leaders are only at the early stages of planning for the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are not prepared as well as they could be for life in modern Britain.
- Although important issues remain that require urgent attention, the executive headteacher, head of school and other senior leaders have been successful in bringing about order and stability to the academy. Management systems are clear and simple. Staff, parents and pupils have high levels of confidence in the leadership of the academy.
- The academy ethos of 'Work Hard: Be Kind' is reinforced and realised through consistent messages and the professional conduct of all members of staff.
- Senior leaders are insisting on increasingly high standards in all aspects of the academy's work. They provide effective support and challenge to other leaders through the regular line management meetings.
- Leaders have rightly given top priority to improving the quality of teaching. The range of training and development programmes available to staff is wide, well thought-out and tailored to teachers' levels of experience. Teachers also have good opportunities to learn from best practice outside the academy.
- Academy leaders have acted quickly to address the issues which led to the disappointing examination performance of 2015. The new timetable, examination entry policy and intervention strategies are already making a difference to pupils' achievement at Key Stage 4.
- The academy's partnerships and sponsors, specifically the University of Nottingham and the Torch Academy Gateway Trust, have made a significant difference to improving the quality of teaching and leadership across the academy.
- Leaders of inclusion, including those responsible for disabled pupils and those with special education needs, are highly skilled and effective. Both staff and pupils demonstrate the ethos of inclusion in what they say and do. As a result, these pupils feel that they belong and make good progress.
- Pupils' achievement is tracked meticulously. Underachievement is spotted early and appropriate arrangements including intervention are now made. Information about pupils' needs and performance is updated regularly. As a result, many pupils are making the progress they should, including those who had previously needed to catch up.
- Pupil premium funding is spent well. There is a wide range of effective provision which is largely personalised to individual needs, with increasing evidence of impact.
- The academy has strengthened its arrangements to support careers information and guidance. 'Futures Fridays' provide regular opportunities for pupils to learn about different employment and study choices from Year 8 onwards.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are highly skilled and knowledgeable about educational matters. As a result, they have held leaders to account rigorously for pupils' performance. They do not accept leaders' evaluation of the academy unquestioningly; they check for themselves through regular focused visits to the academy.
 - Governors have chosen external partnerships and advisory support wisely. This support has been critical in bringing about the improvements in the academy so far.
 - Governors take their statutory duties seriously and keep sound oversight of the academy's finances. Government funding is spent well and regularly evaluated.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safer recruitment practices are carried out stringently. Staff are well trained and vigilant. Safeguarding practices, including record keeping, are robust.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable across the academy. While teachers know and understand the different needs of pupils well, their teaching strategies are not always adapted carefully to suit them. In particular, the most-able pupils in the class sometimes have to work at a lower level before they can move on to more challenging tasks. This slows their progress.
- Teachers mostly mark pupils' work regularly, but the quality of their feedback does not always support improvement. For example, when pupils have been asked to do specific tasks as follow-up work to reinforce understanding, some teachers have not subsequently checked and insisted that they are completed. Sometimes the next steps suggested by teachers are too vague or unhelpful.
- Teachers do not always insist on high standards of presentation. This is especially true in mathematics and science, where untidy and sometimes unfinished work has gone unchallenged.
- Teaching in science is inconsistent. Some teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can do; their preparation is insufficient and they do not manage behaviour well enough. New leaders are tackling weak teaching and new teachers are now being supported.
- The mathematics department has introduced regular, intensive lessons to remedy identified gaps in pupils' basic mathematical skills. However, there is still work to be done to get pupils to the standards that should be expected of them.
- The teaching of English is a strength of the academy. Pupils enjoy the subject because teachers choose texts which are interesting and relevant to young people. Writing and reading skills are developed well. The English department has influenced a reading strategy across the academy. As a result, pupils who are behind their chronological age in reading are catching up quickly.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good or better in a range of subjects including Spanish, physical education and practical and vocational subjects. In physical education, there are high levels of engagement and participation because teachers meticulously plan activities which are interesting and stretching. In the social sciences, including child development and health and social care, teachers ensure that work is carefully planned and they provide pupils with expert guidance to help them make progress.
- Teaching assistants and other adults, including recent graduates, are well prepared for the lessons and employ effective strategies that make a difference for individual targeted pupils.
- Support and guidance for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs is exemplary. In particular, support staff in the academy's specialist provision for pupils with hearing impairment are very skilled and effective.
- The vast majority of lessons are characterised by a calm working environment. Teachers manage behaviour well and use praise effectively to motivate pupils and refocus their attention.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is becoming increasingly reliable. Teachers have made good use of the subject networks run across schools in the Torch Academy Gateway Trust to develop effective ways to improve the accuracy of assessment. They have also gained from involvement in the external marking of common tests, which ensures greater accuracy and reliability of teachers' assessments.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is insufficiently prominent in the curriculum and the broader life of the school. In particular, pupils do not have a well-developed understanding of different cultures and faiths in modern Britain. They lack confidence in discussing issues such as British values and the threats posed by extremism. Tutor sessions and 'collapsed curriculum days' are used to address these issues but these are not always effective and do not add up to a coherent programme overall. However, a programme of personal and social development has recently been introduced to address gaps in pupils' understanding.
- Pupils interviewed said that they know how to keep safe on the internet and understand the risks associated with social networking.
- Pupils show high degrees of empathy and tolerance towards their peers. In particular, the care they show towards pupils with physical disabilities in the academy is remarkable.

- Pupils feel safe and cared for in the academy. Mentors support vulnerable pupils well to think positively, deal with the difficulties in their lives and make progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' attendance is improving term by term, including the attendance of those studying in alternative provision. However, the proportion who are persistently absent from the academy is still too high and overall rates of absence are higher than the national average. Improved leadership and work with the families of persistent absentees is making a difference, with some now attending more regularly.
- The academy's implementation of a new and more demanding behaviour code in 2014 meant that many pupils received either fixed-term or permanent exclusions. This year rates of exclusions have remained high but are falling as a consequence of the successful implementation of new strategies. Work to support the small minority of pupils who persistently violate academy rules is strengthening. Pupils benefit from attending the inclusion unit because the teachers and support staff there address their needs well and help to get them back on track.
- Pupils' behaviour in the classroom and around the academy is now calm, orderly and respectful. They are largely cooperative with one another. There is very little low-level disruption to learning.
- Incidents of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying, are infrequent. Such incidents are treated very seriously by staff. Pupils feel well supported by the adults in the academy.
- Pupils' attitudes towards learning are also improving. An example of this is that pupils' attendance at after-school clubs and revision sessions is high, even when they are on Saturdays.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The 2015 examination results were disappointing but indicative of the legacy of poor progress made by that cohort of pupils during previous years in the academy.
- Pupils' achievement in science in particular has not been as good as it should be. Very few pupils achieved at least two science qualifications last year. Currently, pupils' rates of progress in science are improving quickly as the result of recent measures taken by teachers to plug identified gaps in their knowledge.
- Pupils' rates of progress in mathematics are also improving, but too few are making the rapid progress necessary to reach higher grades. Low-attaining pupils' progress is limited by poor basic numeracy skills. Work to address this issue early in Key Stage 3 is now underway.
- Pupils' progress is now improving across a range of subjects including English, where the proportion making more than the expected progress is higher than nationally, reflecting good teaching.
- Pupils studying Spanish, physical education, practical and vocational subjects achieve well. Results compare favourably with national averages.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar rates of progress in English and mathematics to other pupils in the academy. Their improving progress means that they are catching up with their peers and other pupils nationally, particularly in English. The academy uses a range of intervention strategies including learning mentors and specific resources to help these pupils. Work to improve their literacy and numeracy skills early in Key Stage 3 is making a difference and is being strengthened further this year.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those in the specialist resource provision, make good progress. This is because they are supported well both in and out of the classroom. Teachers and support assistants are very skilled and knowledgeable about their specific needs.
- Pupils attending alternative provision make good progress and are on track to reach their targets. Monitoring reports say that pupils are increasing their skills and improving their attitudes and behaviour. This is because courses are well chosen and appropriate to pupils' needs and interests.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Not enough pupils are making the progress they should in the mathematics and English GCSEs to reach the required grade C. Improvements in the quality of teaching and extra lessons this year are beginning to have an impact for some who intend to take their examination this November. Provision for this aspect

of the 16–19 curriculum, up until this year, has been not been good enough.

- Sixth formers' attendance is improving, especially in Year 12. However, the persistent absence of a small minority has affected overall attendance figures. Recent strategies to improve their attendance is beginning to make a difference. The new head of sixth form is bringing greater rigour to the way pupils' progress is checked and support is provided. He meets with each pupil and ensures that study programmes are appropriate. Tutor sessions are now more effective because tutors have a clear agenda for their meetings. Pupils report that they enjoy their studies.
- The size of the sixth form is relatively small and the curriculum of mainly vocational courses is narrow but successful. A new A-level course in biology is being trialled this year to offer greater breadth to the curriculum. The success of this course is being monitored closely by the head of sixth form.
- The quality of teaching of the social science subjects, which make up the vast majority of the courses available in the sixth form, continues to be good.
- Work experience placements are relevant and well chosen. They add value to the courses and provide pupils with a good experience of the world of work.
- The academy provides effective careers guidance. All pupils last year took up places at further and higher education, including one to a Russell Group university, or employment. Very few pupils do not complete their courses.

School details

Unique reference number	135761
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	10006108

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	766
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Glover
Head of school	Mark Watts
Executive Headteacher	John Tomasevic
Telephone number	0115 929 1492
Website	http://www.nusa.org.uk
Email address	admin@nusa.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 November 2013

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average-sized school of its type. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The others are from a range of other ethnic heritages.
- The academy is jointly sponsored by the University of Nottingham and the Samworth Trust. The Torch Academy Gateway Trust is an established partner. The Chief Executive of the Academy Gateway Trust is also the executive headteacher of the academy.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium government funding is more than twice the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is much smaller than the national average. The proportion in receipt of an educational health care plan is slightly larger than the national average.
- Within the academy there is specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs who have impaired hearing. Currently there are 10 pupils supported by this provision.
- The academy uses alternative provision from the Stone Soup Academy and Equip in Nottingham. Currently there are 12 pupils placed on alternative provision.
- The academy does not meet the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 parts of lessons across the academy. Most of the observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors viewed pupils' work in a range of subjects and spoke with pupils both formally and informally.
- Meetings took place with the head of school, senior leaders, groups of staff, middle leaders and groups of pupils from Years 7 to 13. Inspectors also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the academy's self-evaluation and action plans for 2015/16, information about pupils' attainment and progress, and records relating to pupils' behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors scrutinised the records of governors' minutes and the head of school's report to governors.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lunch- and breaktimes. Inspectors also visited the inclusion area.
- The 62 responses from a staff questionnaire were also considered. Too few responses were recorded on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, to allow analysis. Inspectors took into account the academy's own survey of parents' views.

Inspection team

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