

University Academy Holbeach

Park Road, Holbeach, Spalding, Lincolnshire PE12 7PU

Inspection dates

12–13 March 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	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal, supported by his senior team, sets high expectations for pupils.
- Leaders are capable and experienced. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Governors and trustees have a range of relevant skills and experiences. They are committed to improving the life chances of all pupils.
- The school is welcoming and friendly. Pupils and staff enjoy positive relationships based on mutual respect and trust.
- Leaders have designed a curriculum which balances the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, with humanities, the arts, technical and vocational subjects.
- Pupils at the end of Year 11 in 2018 made progress that was average overall. Pupils currently at the school make good progress in most subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Effective use of pupil premium funding is successfully overcoming barriers to learning, resulting in improving learning and attendance.
- Leaders have brought about improvements in pupils' attendance.
- Teaching is good overall. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and plan engaging activities that challenge pupils.
- Homework is a strength of the school. Homework books enable pupils to demonstrate their independent work, learning and commitment to continually improve their work.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. Pupils are proud of their school and respect the school environment.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school.
- Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Pupils say that they feel safe and that bullying is rare. Safeguarding in the school is effective.
- The sixth form offers a relevant and broad curriculum to meet students' needs. Teaching is consistently good, which results in good outcomes. Strong personal development, support and guidance mean that retention rates are high and destinations for students are very positive.
- Leaders do not consistently and precisely evaluate their monitoring information for different groups of pupils. As a result, strategic planning is not as sharp as it could be.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

To raise standards further, leaders and managers should:

- improve the sharpness of strategic planning by ensuring that all leaders, including governors, precisely use information for different groups of pupils to further improve pupils' outcomes, attendance and behaviour and to reduce exclusions.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have high expectations and aspirations for all pupils. They are dedicated and committed to ensuring that individual pupils receive the best possible opportunities. Leaders work with determination to ensure that high expectations are shared and aimed for by all staff and pupils.
- Senior leaders have a realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They understand the priorities for improvement and have strong capacity to further improve the school.
- The school's development plan has brought about sustained improvements, for example in improving attendance and reducing persistent absence. However, leaders are not consistently precise in analysing monitoring information, particularly in relation to groups of pupils. As a result, strategic planning is not always sharply focused.
- Middle leaders lead with commitment and are keen to provide the best for pupils. As a result, they have brought about consistently good teaching in most subject areas. Middle leaders are enthusiastic and care deeply about pupils and the school community. However, they do not consistently use monitoring information to sharply focus their priorities and actions for further improvement.
- Leaders have worked to improve teaching and learning. Teachers value the many training opportunities provided. As a result, teaching is consistently good and pupils make good progress in most subject areas.
- Leaders have established a coherent system for tracking the progress of current pupils and have an accurate view of current pupils' outcomes. However, they do not consistently use this information to precisely plan to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, for example disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Staff are committed to and are proud to be part of the school community. Morale is positive. They appreciate that leaders consider their well-being, especially when making significant changes with the school.
- Leaders have ensured that pupil premium funding has supported improvement in the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils. The additional funding is also used to support pupils' well-being. However, leaders do not plan and review spending precisely enough to ensure that barriers to learning are consistently addressed for most disadvantaged pupils.
- Likewise, Year 7 catch-up funding is used in different ways to improve literacy and numeracy. But leaders do not sharply evaluate the effectiveness of spending to determine next steps for improvement.
- Leaders have a holistic view of the curriculum, with a focus on preparing pupils well for success and the next stages in their education, training or employment. The curriculum is broad and balanced and is responsive to pupils' needs. It provides a wide range of core subjects as well as relevant academic and vocational options in key stage 4.
- Pupils are provided with meaningful opportunities to develop spiritually, morally,

socially and culturally. For example, Year 9 pupils were seen to benefit from the Shakespeare workshop that occurred during the inspection; and pupils were seen to think deeply in an assembly by being inspired by science experiments and the forthcoming visit to the Science and Engineering Fair. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Trustees and governors have a clear vision for an inclusive school that provides the best education for their pupils. They bring a wide range of experiences and skills to support leaders. However, they do not monitor key areas of the school's work thoroughly and, as a result, they do not consistently challenge leaders sufficiently. For example, they have not challenged leaders about the impact of pupil premium funding.
- Members of the governing body provide a useful 'sounding board' for leaders. They share leaders' determination that the school should be successful, especially in raising aspirations and enhancing life chances for pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff receive regular training related to their safeguarding responsibilities. Regular updates ensure that they know how to report their concerns to designated safeguarding leaders. Staff are vigilant and understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Leaders are trained in safer recruitment. Procedures for checking the suitability of staff, volunteers and visitors meet the requirements of the single central record.
- Leaders with specific safeguarding responsibilities know pupils well. They work well with a range of external agencies and parents to ensure that pupils receive appropriate support and are kept safe.
- Pupils are taught how to be safe in different situations. Those who met with inspectors said they feel safe and are well looked after by teachers and other adults.
- Most parents who completed the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, said that their children are happy and safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers plan their lessons well and make sure that activities are learning focused and help pupils make good progress. Routines are well established and pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning.
- Teachers are skilled at asking questions to check on pupils' understanding of their learning. Teachers give effective feedback in lessons and in pupils' books. As a result, pupils know what they have done well and what they need to do to secure better learning. Most teachers' feedback reflects the school's marking and feedback policy. However, some teachers do not fulfil the school's feedback policy as they do not

provide clear guidance to pupils of what to do to improve their work.

- Most teachers are enthusiastic in their teaching and have strong subject knowledge which they use to plan learning to meet the needs of most pupils. As a result, pupils are often curious, enjoy their learning and are keen to do well. Pupils often ask thoughtful questions which reflect positive attitudes to learning and a desire to learn more.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very strong. Pupils who spoke with inspectors are clear that staff are supportive, wanting them to succeed.
- Homework is set regularly and completed in special homework books. Most pupils take their homework tasks seriously. This is because they recognise the relevance of this work to their learning and know that homework contributes to their good progress.
- Pupils' reading, writing, and communication skills are developed well across the school. Pupils are expected to read aloud often, and each form group chooses a book to read together. Numeracy skills are also developed well in different subjects, as seen in science and geography lessons during the inspection.
- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. As a result, pupils' attitudes to their learning are very good. Pupils behave well and are keen to do well and produce good quality work in their workbooks. Workbooks seen during the inspection were very well presented and reflected pupils' strong pride in their work and learning.

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 well cared for; they say that there is always someone they can talk to if they experience any problems.
- The school provides good pastoral care for its pupils. Pupils who are vulnerable in some way or experience difficulties are offered good-quality support and help. This supports their well-being and enables them to re-engage quickly with their learning.
- Pupils mostly know how to keep themselves safe and manage risks. They are taught this through assemblies, multi-agency days, and tutor periods. These opportunities strengthen pupils' personal development. However, these opportunities are not consistently embedded within the experiences of all year groups.
- Pupils show sensitivity and respect for others. The school is highly inclusive. Pupils are typically very welcoming and appreciative of 'difference' in all its forms.
- Pupils wear their uniform with pride and look smart. They are confident, self-assured and are proud of their school. They look after the school environment.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves well around the school. They are sensible and keep themselves safe. They are well-mannered, helpful and friendly.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning in lessons. They are usually punctual and are ready to work hard and learn. They follow teachers' instructions and requests, mostly at the first time of asking.
- Pupils listen respectfully to each other and are confident in expressing their views, answering or asking relevant questions to extend their learning.
- Pupils understand what bullying is but say that it is not a common occurrence at the school. Those who spoke with inspectors were confident that adults deal with such issues promptly and appropriately.
- Leaders provide an extensive careers guidance programme which includes impartial advice for pupils about their next steps in education, employment or training.
- Most pupils value their education and attend school regularly. Overall attendance has improved in recent years. The attendance of pupils who are regularly absent is also improving.
- Leaders monitor pupils' attendance data and they are beginning to plan even more effective approaches to further improve attendance. However, their evaluation of absence does not sufficiently consider the absence of different groups of pupils to help them develop more effective improvement strategies.
- Leaders and teachers have high expectations of behaviour and this has resulted in high levels of exclusions in recent years. However, there is a downward trend in the number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions, reflecting improved behaviour.
- Leaders do not routinely analyse the information about behaviour of different groups of pupils to determine even more effective approaches to improving the behaviour of some pupils.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision are well supported to overcome their barriers to learning and achieve well. Their learning and well-being are carefully checked by leaders.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In recent years pupils have made good progress from lower starting points than are typical of pupils in most secondary schools. However, in 2018, the rate of progress dipped when compared with that of previous years. Leaders' analysis and evaluation of these outcomes indicate a combination of factors which resulted in this average progress.
- Leaders have responded appropriately to the average progress in 2018 by ensuring that teaching is consistently good. As a result, pupils currently at the school make good progress.
- Inspectors sampled the work of pupils' books and examined the school's recent assessment information. This scrutiny demonstrated that pupils make good progress. Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics, and in a wide range of additional subjects. However, attainment and progress in modern foreign languages remain a

focus for improvement.

- Leaders check that disadvantaged pupils make good progress. When they fall behind in their learning, extra support is put in place including 'Saturday School'. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress.
- Leaders track pupils' progress. However, lack of precision means that there is not a consistently sharp appreciation of the progress of some groups of pupils, for example the progress of pupils with SEND. As a result, timely support is not consistently provided, meaning that the progress these pupils make is not as good as it should be.
- Pupils are very well prepared for their next stages of life and education. Almost all pupils moved on to carefully considered and worthwhile education, work or apprenticeships when they leave the school.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The leadership of the sixth form is good. There is a caring ethos and a passion to ensure that students achieve well. All safeguarding responsibilities are met.
- Leaders set high expectations for their students. Students value their experience in the sixth form and recognise the importance of positive professional relationships. Students enjoy their learning in the sixth form.
- Teaching and learning in the sixth form are consistently good. Students benefit from teachers with strong subject knowledge. Teachers use this to plan effective learning. As a result, students make consistently good progress in both academic and vocational qualifications.
- Students who enter the sixth form without a higher-grade GCSE pass in English and/or mathematics are supported to succeed. As a result, a higher than average number of students go on to gain a good pass in both subjects.
- The proportion of students who complete their courses is well above the national average. In 2018, nearly every student successfully completed their study programme.
- Students' behaviour and attendance are key strengths. Students look smart and conduct themselves well. They serve as positive role models for younger pupils.
- Students undertake a well-planned programme of work experience to complement their study programme. They also take part in a variety of enrichment opportunities which include various community activities. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- A well-planned programme of personal, social, health and economic development complements the enrichment and study programmes. Disadvantaged students and those who do not have a family tradition of university education are supported effectively. Students are very well prepared for their next stages in education, employment or training.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is structured to meet the learning needs of students. They provide a range of academic and vocational subjects and qualifications, with the aim of providing clear routes to students' next steps in learning at the end of Year 13.

School details

Unique reference number	137282
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10086726

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1304
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	290
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Professor Toby Wilkinson
Principal	Steven Baragwanath
Telephone number	01406 423042
Website	www.universityacademyholbeach.org
Email address	enquiries@uah.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 January 2016

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Lincolnshire Educational Trust. The trustees are the appropriate authority.
- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through pupil premium funding is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average. The percentage of pupils with an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than the national average

and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is below the average national figure.

- The school uses several alternative providers for some of its pupils. These include Bridge House, Build-a-future and the Pilgrim School.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 52 lessons, or parts of lessons, and two assemblies. Senior leaders carried out some observations jointly with inspectors. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books and sampled books in classes.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, leaders of subject departments, other leaders and members of staff. They spoke with groups of pupils.
- The lead inspector met trustees and governors, including the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils around the school. In addition, they evaluated the 52 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 28 free-text responses.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised several documents, including the school's self-evaluation, minutes of the meetings of the governing body, improvement plans, and school information on pupils' recent attainment and progress.
- Inspectors also considered behaviour and attendance information, policies and procedures relating to special educational needs, pupil premium funding, Year 7 catch-up funding, safeguarding and child protection.

Inspection team

Chris Davies, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christine Horrocks	Ofsted Inspector
Bernadette Green	Ofsted Inspector
Denise Newsome	Ofsted Inspector

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