

Inspection of Springwell Alternative Academy Spalding

Matmore Gate, Spalding, Lincolnshire PE11 2PN

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The executive principal of this school is Lisa Ashcroft-Day. This school is part of the Wellspring Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Mark Wilson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Cheryl Hobson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff at Springwell Alternative Academy make a difference to pupils' lives. Pupils receive care, guidance and support in a warm and nurturing environment. Pupils who attend this school often have difficult previous school experiences, or have significant challenges in their lives. Staff understand this and have created a positive, supportive environment where pupils do well. There are kind, professional relationships between staff and pupils.

Staff know pupils exceptionally well. They carefully guide pupils to understand their behaviours and give them the strategies to learn how to self-regulate well. Pupils feel safe and understood. The school's 'golden threads' shine through all they do, particularly unconditional positive regard for all. As a result, staff get the best from pupils and pupils want to do well.

Pupils get along well with each other, and they are respectful and tolerant of each other. They receive strong pastoral support from staff.

Pupils enjoy attending this school. They value the opportunity to gain an education and benefit from the rich experiences offered to them, for example visiting authors, cooking meals to enjoy together and taking part in adventurous outdoor activities.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Many of the pupils on roll have been permanently excluded or have missed significant time in formal education. Dependent on need, pupils can attend the school for weeks, months or years. The curriculum is carefully considered so that all pupils can maximise their learning whether they are at the school for a short period of time or longer. Staff assess pupils as soon as they join the school. Teachers then plan individually for each pupil. Pupils rapidly broaden their knowledge during their time here. The vast majority of pupils successfully reintegrate into a mainstream school or move on to suitable specialist provision. Year 11 pupils follow a highly personalised curriculum, which is broad and ambitious.

Staff make precise checks on what pupils know and need to learn next. Where needed, staff ensure that they teach pupils any knowledge needed to backfill gaps. This includes offering pre-teaching material and providing one-to-one support. This helps to prepare pupils to return back to their mainstream settings where appropriate.

All pupils in this school have identified special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many pupils also have an education, health and care plan (EHC). Staff prioritise getting to know pupils' needs quickly and catering for them. Pupils receive specialist targeted support for their social, emotional and mental health needs, for example play therapy. Pupils can also benefit from a personalised virtual reality sensory regulation space.

Reading is prioritised. When pupils join the school, staff accurately assess pupils' reading knowledge. Pupils who are in the early stages of reading receive lessons in phonics. All pupils receive regular timetabled reading lessons where they explore a wide range of articles and texts. Pupils learn to enjoy texts through the topic-based curriculum.

Strategies designed to help pupils improve and manage their behaviour are highly effective and behaviour improves significantly over time. Many pupils have struggled to attend school previously. For the majority of pupils, attendance also improves. Pupils know they can achieve at this school and respond well to the high expectations set for all.

Staff are aware that they need to teach pupils about personal and social issues explicitly, as these are areas where many pupils experience difficulties. The highly effective personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum ensures that pupils know how to keep safe online and in the wider community. Pupils learn to take care of their mental and physical health, including cooking nutritious meals. They enjoy eating these with staff. Pupils actively support each other's well-being. At the end of each day, pupils celebrate their own and each other's achievements. There is an effective careers programme. Pupils have ambitious plans for their futures.

Governors and trustees know the school exceptionally well. The professional development provided to staff is exceptional. Leaders engage well with staff, parents and carers. Staff said that leaders are mindful of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at

any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	144763
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10288360
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	41
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Cheryl Hobson
Principal	Lisa Ashcroft-Day
Website	https://springwellalternativeacademyspalding.co.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Springwell Alternative Academy Spalding caters for pupils who have been permanently excluded from mainstream school or are at high risk of permanent exclusion.
- All pupils have an identified SEND need and a significant number have an EHC plan. The predominant need of most pupils is social, emotional and mental health. Some pupils arrive at the school with undiagnosed SEND needs. Leaders secure an EHC plan for a small proportion of pupils while they are on the school roll.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- At the time of inspection, there were no Reception-age children in this school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading; mathematics; English and personal, social and health education (PSHE). For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to pupils about their learning.
- To further look at the curriculum, inspectors also met with leaders about the curriculum plans in science, including looking at examples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the actions leaders take to keep pupils safe. The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks.
- Inspectors met with pupils to gather their views about the school.
- The lead inspector examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, records of governance and documentation relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour. Inspectors also reviewed the documents available on the school and trust websites.
- Inspectors observed informal times.
- Inspectors met leaders to discuss professional development.
- Inspectors met with staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive of the trust and also with governors.

Inspection team

Anne Maingay, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Matthew Rooney

Ofsted Inspector

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