

Inspection of Smithdon High School

Downs Road, Hunstanton, Norfolk PE36 5HY

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Amanda Gibbins. This school is part of West Norfolk Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Andy Johnson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Roger Livesey.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are benefiting from the improvements made since the school's previous inspection. They know their teachers have high aspirations for them and respond to these well. Most pupils work hard in lessons and produce high-quality work. Over time pupils learn well. Their achievements have increased steadily in recent years.

There are clear routines in place to ensure pupils' conduct is good. The majority of pupils understand and follow the agreed systems. This compliance leads to most lessons progressing without interruption. However, a number of pupils feel that some adults focus too much on weaker behaviours. This leads to some pupils having negative feelings about school.

Pupils value the opportunities to nurture existing talents and develop new ones. This goes beyond the traditional offer of sport. Many pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), take advantage of these opportunities. High numbers of pupils participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, pushing themselves commendably beyond their comfort zones. Pupils make positive contributions to the community and achieve personal success.

Pupils feel safe. Pupils know that there are adults around school who will help them in times of difficulty.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has focused on improving the curriculum. Subject specialists have used the national curriculum as a starting point. Working with the trust they have identified the key knowledge that pupils need to know and by when. This has resulted in a series of well-crafted, ambitious programmes of study. Teachers support pupils to use what they already know to help them learn new content.

Teachers generally explain the information they are teaching in small manageable steps. This helps pupils understand this knowledge before moving on to the next stage. However, there are occasions when some teachers do not check how well pupils have understood what they have been taught. Sometimes, questions do not relate closely enough to learning tasks. Questions are not precise enough to pinpoint specific knowledge gaps. This means teachers are not fully aware of what pupils know, so when this happens, teachers do not adapt teaching enough for those pupils who have not understood. Consequently, in these instances pupils do not remember what they have been taught over time.

Pupils learning to read confidently and fluently is a priority. Well-planned interventions support those pupils who struggle with reading to swiftly catch up. Pupils understand how important it is to read well for their current and future studies.

Teachers adapt their teaching to help pupils with SEND overcome specific barriers to learning. This helps pupils, including pupils with SEND, remember more over time.

The school has worked hard to improve the behaviour of pupils. There are high expectations. Pupils understand these and the consequences for failing to meet these standards. Most adults consistently apply the expected routines in managing behaviour. Some adults develop positive relationships with pupils. In these cases, pupils respond by trying hard in lessons and behaving well. However, at times, pupils hold a view that these relationships are not founded on trust and respect. They do not feel valued for their achievements and contributions and therefore do not make the effort to behave as positively. As a result, pupils develop and embed a negative view of school and learning.

Attendance is improving. Despite the school's best efforts some pupils still do not attend regularly. Leaders know there is further work to do to ensure attendance continues to get better.

Teachers effectively deliver a well-planned personal social and health education programme. This supports pupils to develop an increasing understanding of sensitive topics. They are well prepared to become positive citizens in modern Britain. Pupils learn the importance of difference, tolerance and respect. They use this knowledge to embrace and celebrate diversity. The careers programme is well constructed. It provides pupils with the information they need. It supports them to make informed choices.

Staff feel valued. They appreciate how changes, such as to the assessment practices, have reduced their workload. Staff feel included. They are proud to work at the school.

The local governing board and trustees are well informed about the school. They have been central in successfully securing the positive reputation of the school in the wider community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all teachers use assessment precisely enough to pinpoint how well pupils have understood what they have just been taught. Questions do not focus on specific pieces of knowledge or relate to the independent activity that follows. This means that teachers are not always fully aware of the specific reasons why some pupils cannot access the learning activities set and are unable to adapt their approaches appropriately. Consequently, when this happens pupils do not learn well. The school should ensure that all teachers are trained to use the agreed

assessment strategies to determine exactly what pupils know so they can effectively adapt their teaching to address gaps and misconceptions.

- Some pupils do not have positive relationships with some adults in school. In these cases, they develop negative attitudes to school and education. The school should encourage and foster positive relationships based on respect and trust between pupils and all staff.

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 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	143520
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10288546
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	581
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Roger Livesey
Headteacher	Amanda Gibbins
Website	www.smithdonhigh.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 October 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Smithdon High School is part of West Norfolk Academies Trust. The school joined the trust in January 2017.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2022. Prior to that she held roles as deputy headteacher and head of school at the school.
- The school currently uses two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 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.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with representatives from the local governing board and the chair of the trust board. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the trust executive team, including the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, geography and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To further inspect the curriculum, inspectors listened to pupils read to a familiar adult and reviewed documentation setting out support for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils. The lead inspector reviewed the 44 responses to the pupil survey.
- To gather parents' views, inspectors reviewed the 64 responses and 46 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke with several staff and reviewed the 45 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Dave Gibson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sally Garrett	Ofsted Inspector
Clare Gammons	Ofsted Inspector
Carol Dallas	Ofsted Inspector

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