



Report on IQM Inclusive School Award



School Name Inspire Academy

School Address Cornlands Road
York
England
YO24 3WZ

Head/Principal Rickie Wilson

Assessment Date 5th December 2025

Assessor Rosy Vincenzi-Cavanagh

Sources of Evidence:

• School Policies • IQM Self-Evaluation Report (SER) • School Website • School Vision and Values • Pupils' Books • Observations • Learning Walks • Observation of Pupils' Arrival at School • Inclusive Teaching Promise Framework

Meetings Held with:

• Trust Inclusion Lead • Head Teacher, SENCo & Safeguarding Lead • Parent • Pupils • Teaching & Support Staff



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Overall Evaluation

Inspire Academy is an Independent Secondary Specialist Provision located in York, specifically designed for students requiring Social, Emotional, or Mental Health (SEMH) support. Established in September 2023, it operates under the Excel Learning Trust. Currently, the school has 21 students on roll, all of whom have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), with 52% holding an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP). Initially functioning as a Resource Base, Inspire Academy supported pupils from two local secondary schools—York High School, which serves a community with higher deprivation, and Milthorpe Secondary School, which caters to a more affluent background. The school has since expanded its intake to accept referrals from the Local Authority (LA), resulting in a diverse demographic where 86% of students come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The establishment of Inspire Academy was a proactive response by the Trust's innovative Inclusion Leader to address the challenging behaviours exhibited by pupils facing SEMH difficulties within the two secondary schools. Many of these students were at risk of permanent exclusion due to high suspension rates and low attendance. The building, formerly an isolation unit for York High, has undergone extensive renovations to create a safe and nurturing environment that fosters a genuine sense of belonging. One pupil, who previously faced high levels of suspension and attended multiple schools before arriving at Inspire, described it as feeling "like a family." This sentiment reflects the school's commitment to inclusivity, which goes beyond mere acceptance to actively cultivate a strong sense of community. By prioritising both emotional support and academic achievement, Inspire Academy ensures the best possible outcomes for its vulnerable learners.

Since its establishment, Inspire Academy has embarked upon a significant journey, appointing a Head of School who is profoundly committed to inclusion and assumes all responsibilities of the Senior Leadership Team, reflecting the small size of the school. Over time, the staff team has expanded, now comprising two teachers and four higher-level teaching assistants. The school frequently serves as a 'circuit breaker' for some Key Stage 3 students, who attend for a term block, five days a week. This approach effectively supports their educational access while ensuring regular contact with their mainstream school.

During my visit, I observed the start of the day, which features a deliberately designed 'soft start' that allows pupils to arrive at school in a calm and regulated manner. As I walked around, I noticed one student engaged in a mentoring session, participating in one-on-one work with a teaching assistant. Further down the corridor, I encountered pupils who were friendly and open, with some enjoying a game of table tennis in a breakout room. Additionally, all students are provided with a free breakfast to kick off their day. The relaxed and tranquil atmosphere is truly remarkable, especially considering the backgrounds of the pupils, many of whom have faced significant challenges in previous settings. This environment exemplifies the sense of safety and security that Inspire Academy fosters for its young people.

The leadership team is dedicated to ensuring that the school values of kindness, resilience, and belonging are not only visible throughout the school but also felt in the daily experiences of students and staff. This commitment is reflected in the nurturing and supportive approach of the staff, creating an environment where pupils feel safe and secure. A key element of this ethos is the excellent three-way communication between staff, students, and parents. All staff members, whether teaching or support, engage with parents regularly through personalised texts and phone calls, celebrating the positive achievements of their children each day.



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Inspire Academy adopts a non-hierarchical approach to staffing, fostering positive relationships between students and staff, and empowering staff to see themselves as integral stakeholders within the school community. Every member of the team, both teaching and support staff, is assigned responsibility for an area of curriculum development as part of their appraisal process. Weekly Continuous Professional Development (CPD) meetings are held, where all staff are encouraged to attend and actively contribute. This collaborative environment instils a genuine sense of responsibility for the curriculum among staff, illustrating that the commitment to inclusion permeates both the leadership of the school and the experiences of the students.

As part of the inclusive curriculum, students take great pride in their Personal Development lessons, consistently expressing high regard for this aspect of their day. These lessons are thoughtfully planned and delivered by a nurturing Teaching Assistant who has a deep understanding of the pupils. One student remarked that these lessons are about "teaching you real life, which you don't get to learn about in mainstream school," underscoring their significance. Aimed at fostering responsible citizenship and helping students comprehend the world around them, these lessons create an atmosphere of safety and openness. The carefully selected Teaching Assistant has established excellent relationships with the students, encouraging them to share openly as they feel secure in doing so.

Throughout my visit, I observed pupils who were genuinely engaged and eager to be part of the school community, embodying the values of kindness, resilience, and belonging. It is important to highlight that these students often struggled to attend their previous mainstream settings, and when they did, they frequently exhibited negative attitudes towards learning, often resulting in disruptive behaviour stemming from various SEND needs and trauma. However, during my visit, the students were supported by nurturing staff whose relational approach underpins all their interactions. Consequently, the pupils were highly engaged, actively participating in lessons when prompted and receiving consistent positive feedback and encouragement from attentive staff.

I am of the opinion that the school fully meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark's Inclusive School Award. I recommend that the school be awarded the Inclusive School Award and be reassessed in three years' time.

I also recommend that the school should consider applying for Centre of Excellence status subject to the inclusion within its plans of the appropriate areas for development and the completion of the Centre of Excellence documentation. If the school chooses to pursue this status and it were to be awarded the school would be subject to annual review from this point forwards.

Assessor: Rosy Vincenzi-Cavanagh

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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Joe McCann MBA NPQH
Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd



Element 1 - The Inclusion Values of the School

Inspire Academy embodies a strong commitment to inclusive values, fostering a sense of belonging among its students. Recognising that many young people enter the school with a history of feeling detached from their previous educational experiences, the school has deliberately integrated belonging as one of its core values. This focus on inclusivity is essential, as many students have previously associated school with negative experiences, leading to a lack of engagement and a sense of alienation. By prioritising belonging, Inspire Academy aims to create an environment where every student feels valued, supported, and integral to the school community.

The school's approach to inclusion is reflected in its policies and practices. Inspire Academy serves as an assessment place for some students who do not yet have an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP), allowing for personalised educational experiences tailored to individual needs. This approach ensures that all students, regardless of their specific circumstances, receive the necessary support to thrive both academically and socially. By working collaboratively across the Trust, the school identifies needs earlier, facilitating timely interventions that can significantly impact students' educational journeys.

Inspire Academy has established a partnership with the Local Authority (LA) to commission places for students, allowing for a more extensive reach within the community. Currently, the school has five commissioned places, which serve to support young people who may not have access to adequate resources in their mainstream schools. This arrangement is particularly beneficial for those who have experienced difficulties in their previous educational settings due to their SEMH needs, as it provides them with a nurturing environment where they can rebuild their confidence and re-engage with learning.

Inspire Academy plays a vital role in the strategic management of the family of schools it belongs to, particularly in supporting its partner secondary schools with challenges such as low attendance and high suspension rates, which have historically impacted many of its students. Within the Trust, when certain vulnerable students do attend school, they often find it difficult to engage in lessons, leading to gaps in their knowledge and skills. To tackle these challenges, the Trust has implemented a comprehensive attendance initiative, appointing a dedicated staff member to track attendance across all schools. This position is essential for identifying patterns and developing strategies to enhance attendance rates.

Drawing inspiration from successful frameworks, such as those employed in Brighton and Hove, Inspire Academy has tailored its attendance procedures to better meet the needs of its students. The school has established a supportive framework that fosters open communication with families, aiming to understand the underlying factors contributing to low attendance. By engaging with parents and students to discuss their educational experiences, the academy can pinpoint when attendance issues arose and determine the necessary interventions to facilitate improvement.

To further enhance attendance, the Trust has piloted a questionnaire for parents and pupils, which has yielded promising results, showing a 55% increase in attendance. This initiative is part of a broader strategy to ensure that all possible measures are taken to prevent fixed penalties for families struggling with attendance. The Trust's attendance officer plays a vital role in this process, producing weekly reports that break down attendance data by group. This analysis allows the school to identify key actions needed to support students who may be at risk of falling behind.

The school's attendance rate stands at 68%, which is above the national average for alternative provisions, which is currently 59%. Despite being above national average,



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the school is committed to continuous improvement of attendance and outcomes for its pupils. The academy's approach to attendance is multifaceted, incorporating home visits for families struggling with attendance and providing additional family support, including food bank assistance. During the holiday season, the school takes the initiative to deliver hampers to every family, reinforcing the sense of community and support that Inspire Academy strives to cultivate.

Inspire Academy's inclusive values are evident in every aspect of its operations, from its commitment to fostering a sense of belonging to its proactive approach in addressing the diverse needs of its students. By prioritising inclusivity, the school not only enhances the educational experiences of its young people but also empowers them to become responsible citizens who understand and engage with the world around them. The academy's dedication to creating a nurturing and supportive environment ensures that all students have the opportunity to succeed, both academically and personally, paving the way for a brighter future.

Next Steps:

- Continue to improve SEND attendance using the attend framework and making school unmissable framework.



Element 2 - Leadership, Management and Accountability

Inspire Academy demonstrates a robust framework of leadership and management that is deeply rooted in accountability and collaboration. The Head of School maintains close links with local secondary schools, working closely with Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) and Heads. This collaborative approach allows the Head Teacher of Inspire to offer specialist support to students before they arrive, ensuring that they are not new to the school and that there is a comprehensive understanding of their backgrounds and needs. This familiarity is crucial in creating a supportive transition where students can thrive.

Transitioning students back to mainstream schools is a gradual process at Inspire Academy. Meetings between SENCOs and Head of Schools are held to discuss the needs of students returning to their previous settings. A personalised 'Pupil Passport' is created for each student, outlining their specific requirements and allows students to contribute to the process. This inclusive approach ensures that students feel empowered and supported as they reintegrate into mainstream education.

The Head Teacher has demonstrated a commitment to accountability by providing evidence of the school's impact on attendance and suspension rates to the trustees. Previously, some students faced up to 40 days of suspension while on roll at their mainstream setting, but through targeted interventions and support at Inspire, attendance has dramatically improved. This focus on data-driven decision-making highlights the school's dedication to continuous improvement and the well-being of its students.

Inspire Academy has embraced the concept of an 'Inclusive Teaching Promise' instead of simply referring to 'ordinarily available provision,' ensuring that all staff are well-equipped to effectively support students. This commitment is demonstrated through the learning walks conducted as part of termly SEN reviews, allowing staff to observe and reflect on best practices in inclusive education. Being part of a small Trust further enhances the school's ability to maintain consistency in teaching approaches and enables staff to leverage the expertise of colleagues throughout the network.

The governance structure of Inspire Academy has evolved, with the Trust board initially serving as the governing body. Recently, a local governing board was established, with four new members appointed, all of whom have backgrounds in SEN and education. This diverse mix of expertise will enhance the school's leadership and accountability, ensuring that the needs of all students are prioritised.

Staff well-being is a key focus within the school, with regular workload surveys conducted each term to gather feedback from all staff members. The Trust analyses this data to identify areas for improvement, fostering a culture of openness and support. The school's open-door policy encourages staff to communicate freely, promoting a collaborative environment where everyone feels valued.

The structure of CPD at Inspire Academy is designed to ensure that all staff members feel equally valued and supported. This network of support, bolstered by being part of the Trust, provides staff with access to a bank of resources that can be personalised for their specific cohorts. Each half term, the CPD calendar includes sessions focused on subject expertise, allowing staff to improve their knowledge and share effective practices. Collaborative discussions with teachers from York High further enhance this professional development, ensuring that staff have the tools and support needed to meet the diverse needs of their students.



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Inspire Academy's leadership and management practices exemplify a commitment to accountability, collaboration, and inclusivity. By fostering strong relationships with local schools, prioritising professional development, and ensuring that all staff members are engaged in the educational process, the academy creates an environment where students can thrive. This holistic approach not only supports the academic success of young people but also nurtures their personal development, preparing them for a successful future.

Next Steps:

- Develop a local governing board / committee for Inspire Academy with key SEND/ Inclusion role/s.



Element 3 - Curriculum (Structure, Pupil Engagement and Adaptation)

Inspire Academy has implemented a curriculum structure that prioritises shorter lessons, typically lasting 40 minutes, allowing for a seamless flow between theoretical and practical subjects. For instance, a typical day might include mathematics followed by physical education, science, and art. This intentional planning is designed to reduce cognitive overload, ensuring that students remain engaged and focused throughout the day.

Every staff member is assigned an area of curriculum development as part of their appraisal, with dedicated meetings held to discuss progress and share insights. Teaching assistants are actively involved in Continuous Professional Development (CPD), ensuring that all key stakeholders provide feedback on the same students, fostering a sense of equality among staff. The school has established pledges that outline the experiences young people should achieve before leaving, including aspirational visits such as touring a university. This initiative plays a crucial role in promoting equity in aspirations for pupils, ensuring that all students have access to the same opportunities and support in reaching their goals.

Inspire Academy also places a strong emphasis on outdoor education, offering activities such as walks and climbing, and is in the process of developing an outdoor space at York High. These mapped experiences are embedded year after year, providing students with meaningful opportunities that are purposefully designed to enhance their learning journey. The school actively seeks cultural capital opportunities, funded through various initiatives, including pupil premium allocations, to support reward trips and activities such as agility training, indoor trampoline sessions, and visits to universities and farms. To facilitate these experiences, the school shares a mini bus licence with York High, allowing for better planning and organisation of trips in the future.

The Personal Development and Preparing for Adulthood curriculums are integral to the school's educational framework, encompassing careers, Personal, Social, Health, and Citizenship Education (PSHCE), sex and relationships education, and religious education. These subjects are designed to respond to current issues in the news, addressing real-life topics such as road safety and consent. By covering a broad spectrum of themes, the curriculum aims to help students become responsible citizens who understand the world around them, while also promoting British values, protected characteristics, and equality.

A teaching assistant with excellent relationships leads Personal Development lessons, creating an environment where students feel safe to share their thoughts and experiences. This deliberate choice has fostered a culture of safety and openness within these lessons, allowing for meaningful discussions. Guest speakers, such as a mother who shared her story about river safety following the tragic loss of her daughter, provide valuable insights and real-world connections that students might not otherwise encounter.

The school personalises the curriculum through the use of individual 'pupil passports', which serve as comprehensive Provision Maps. These passports enable tailored educational experiences that cater to the specific needs of each student. Every term, staff members conduct thorough reviews of these pupil passports, allowing for adjustments to be made based on the evolving requirements of the students. During these reviews, all staff come together in CPD meetings, fostering a collaborative environment where everyone has the opportunity to contribute their insights and suggestions. This collective approach ensures that the support provided is not only responsive but also reflective of the diverse needs within the student body.



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While the support needed for pupils is universal and nurturing, it is also highly specific. For instance, some students may require particular tools such as specialised writing pens, wobble cushions for self-regulation, or fidget devices to aid concentration. The effectiveness of this personalised support is greatly enhanced by the staff's deep understanding of their students. By knowing each pupil well, staff can identify the individual resources and strategies that will best support their learning and engagement. This tailored approach not only promotes academic success but also fosters a sense of belonging and confidence among students, as they feel seen and valued within the school community.

Literacy is identified as a key area for development moving forward at Inspire Academy. One teacher is currently working towards their National Professional Qualification (NPQ) in Literacy and is responsible for teaching literacy across both key stages. This strategic focus on embedding CPD reflects a shift from last year's emphasis on pedagogical practices in classrooms to a concentrated effort on enhancing the literacy curriculum. The drive for improved literacy is essential for many young people at the school, as it directly influences their vocabulary development and reading skills, which are critical for making significant academic progress. The Trust facilitates subject leader days, allowing teachers to collaborate and share expertise across different subjects. The teacher pursuing the NPQ in leading literacy is engaging with a teaching school in York, further enhancing their skills and knowledge in this vital area.

The rationale behind the literacy policy at Inspire Academy is rooted in the understanding that low literacy levels can adversely affect students' aspirations and self-confidence. The policy focuses on four key areas: reading fluency, extended writing, vocabulary development, and building stamina in writing. By raising the profile of literacy within the school, Inspire Academy ensures that teaching literacy is seen as a collective responsibility, with every staff member recognising that every interaction is an opportunity to model high standards.

To support vocabulary and oracy development, the school has implemented initiatives such as a "word of the week" programme, where students delve into the meanings and origins of new words. Reading assessments are conducted using a new group reading test, with reading ages shared among staff to inform their teaching strategies. This data helps identify the specific difficulties young people may face in their reading, allowing for targeted support. Within Key Stage 3, the school utilises the Reading+ software package, which provides an initial online diagnosis of reading ability and offers a selection of books tailored to each student's reading level. This resource is used weekly, providing ongoing feedback and data to track progress.

The curriculum is designed to front-load vocabulary and reading skills at the beginning of the year, with a focus on developing writing and oracy skills towards the end. Last year, the model of learning was prioritised, ensuring that all students had a clear understanding of expectations. Regular work scrutiny sessions are held, where staff bring students' books to review standards and presentation, encouraging a culture of excellence with the 'strive for five' initiative, which promotes neat and organised work.

To further enhance oracy skills, Inspire adopts an approach which enables young people to manage their conversational skills effectively. This approach not only supports their academic development but also fosters essential life skills, preparing them for future interactions in both educational and social contexts. Through these comprehensive literacy initiatives, Inspire Academy is committed to ensuring that all students have the tools and support they need to succeed academically and personally.

This comprehensive approach to curriculum structure, pupil engagement, and adaptation reflects Inspire Academy's commitment to providing an inclusive and supportive educational environment for all students. By prioritising the individual needs of each young person, the school not only enhances their academic success but also



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nurtures their personal growth and development, preparing them for a successful future.

Next Steps:

- To embed the new Literacy Strategy 2025-26.
- To develop the outdoor education curriculum, initially focused on Key Stage 3.
- To further develop the careers and guidance curriculum, building students' aspiration through imaginative and engaging learning experiences from a range of lessons, visits and guest speakers.



Element 4 - Teaching and Learning, Learning Environment, Planning Resources and Pedagogy

Inspire Academy places a strong emphasis on creating an effective teaching and learning environment that fosters collaboration, engagement, and well-being among its students. The learning environment is thoughtfully set up to resemble a typical classroom, encouraging students to work together and engage in meaningful classroom dialogue. This design not only promotes academic collaboration but also helps to build a sense of community among the students, allowing them to feel more connected to one another and to their learning.

To further enhance the learning experience, the school has developed breakout spaces where pupils can relax and unwind. These areas include facilities for recreational activities, such as table tennis, which provide students with opportunities to engage in physical activity and social interaction outside of structured lessons. Additionally, the school is in the process of developing a sensory room, which will offer a calming environment for students who may need a moment of respite from the classroom.

The school boasts excellent facilities that are well-utilised, including a cooking room where students can learn valuable life skills and a shared climbing wall and gym located on the grounds. These resources not only enrich the curriculum but also provide students with opportunities to engage in physical activities that promote health and well-being. The integration of these facilities into the school environment underscores the importance of a holistic approach to education, where physical, emotional, and academic development are all prioritised.

Inspire Academy encourages pupils to take ownership of their learning by allowing them to request breakout time when they feel the need. This flexibility is crucial for maintaining a harmonious working environment in the classroom, as it enables students to manage their own emotions and behaviours proactively. If a student begins to feel restless or overwhelmed, they can take a brief walk or spend time in a breakout space, helping to reset their focus and engagement levels. This approach not only supports individual needs but also contributes to a positive classroom atmosphere where all students can thrive.

The school day is intentionally structured to reduce cognitive overload, with a soft start from 9 am to 9:30 am and an early finish at 2 pm. This shorter school day is designed to accommodate the unique needs of the students, many of whom may struggle with longer periods of concentration. By providing a more manageable schedule, Inspire Academy ensures that students remain engaged and focused throughout the day, maximising their learning potential.

At Inspire Academy, the teaching and learning approach is holistic, focusing on the comprehensive development of young people to ensure success across all areas of their education. The majority of students arrive at the academy having been entered for GCSEs, and the school is dedicated to creating an environment where low expectations are not an option. Instead, Inspire Academy embraces a rigorous curriculum that prioritises academic excellence and high standards. This commitment to maintaining high expectations empowers students to engage fully in their learning and reach their full potential. By providing a challenging yet supportive educational experience, the academy fosters a culture of achievement that prepares students for future academic and personal success.

Overall, Inspire Academy's commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive teaching and learning environment is evident in every aspect of its operations. By prioritising collaboration, flexibility, and holistic development, the school ensures that all students have the opportunity to thrive academically and personally. The thoughtful integration of



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facilities, resources, and pedagogical strategies reflects the school's dedication to fostering a positive and enriching educational experience for all young people. Through these efforts, Inspire Academy is not only preparing students for academic success but also equipping them with the skills and confidence they need to navigate the complexities of life beyond school.

Next Steps:

- To embed a teaching, learning and assessment model that is consistently applied across all key stages. Although significant progress was made in 2024-25 this needs to be embedded and consistently applied. Work with stakeholders to review and further develop the praise and reward policy.



Element 5 - Assessment

Inspire Academy is acutely aware of the diverse assessment needs of its students, many of whom are working significantly below age-related expectations. The vast majority of young people entering the academy face challenges in their academic performance, with only a few exceptions. This reality necessitates a tailored approach to assessment and intervention, ensuring that each student receives the support they need to progress.

A primary focus at Inspire Academy is literacy, as many students demonstrate a lack of enjoyment in reading, largely stemming from their previous school experiences and limited exposure to literature at home. This disinterest can significantly impede their overall academic progress, highlighting the need for the school to implement effective strategies that nurture a love for reading. By designing engaging reading activities and offering access to a diverse range of texts, Inspire Academy seeks to foster a more positive attitude towards literacy among its students.

In mathematics, some students are working at entry-level, posing a risk of not achieving a GCSE grade at all. Recognising this, the school has developed a rigorous curriculum that balances high expectations with realistic goals. While the school maintains academic rigour, it is equally important to focus on developing the skills that students already possess in both mathematics and English. This approach allows for a more personalised learning experience, where students can build confidence and competence in their abilities.

To support this development, Inspire Academy offers various interventions, including targeted maths and phonics support. These interventions are designed to address specific gaps in knowledge and skills, providing students with the tools they need to succeed. Additionally, enrichment sessions in subjects such as science are well attended. These sessions not only enhance students' understanding of the curriculum but also provide opportunities for hands-on learning and exploration.

The school's commitment to assessment extends beyond academic performance; it encompasses the social and emotional well-being of its students as well. Inspire Academy utilises the Boxall Profile as a key tool to assess and understand the social, emotional, and behavioural needs of its young people. By creating a supportive environment where students feel safe to express their needs and challenges, the academy fosters a culture of openness and trust. This environment is crucial for effective assessment, as it encourages students to engage fully in their learning and development while allowing staff to implement targeted support strategies based on the insights gained from the Boxall Profile.

The school places a strong emphasis on life skills, recognising that academic success is only one aspect of a young person's development. By focusing on practical skills and preparing students for their next steps, Inspire Academy ensures that they are equipped to navigate the challenges of adulthood. This holistic approach to assessment and education reflects the school's commitment to fostering well-rounded individuals who are prepared for life beyond the classroom.

Overall, Inspire Academy's approach to assessment is comprehensive and multifaceted. By prioritising the individual needs of each student, the school not only addresses academic challenges but also promotes personal growth and development. Through targeted interventions, enrichment opportunities, and a focus on life skills, Inspire Academy is dedicated to ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to succeed and thrive in their educational journeys.

Next Steps:



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- To improve the standardisation of assessments at GCSE level with the support of the Trust secondary schools (York High School and Millthorpe).



Element 6 - Behaviour, Attitudes to Learning and Personal Development

Inspire Academy is committed to fostering positive behaviour and attitudes to learning among its students, recognising that consistent expectations are essential for helping young people understand the behaviours that are expected of them. This approach involves explicitly teaching students about appropriate conduct and the impact of their actions on themselves and others. By instilling these values, the school prepares students for adulthood and promotes a positive impact on society.

Many students at Inspire Academy enter with significant gaps in their academic performance, often working well below age-related expectations. This reality necessitates a tailored approach to behaviour and learning, where the focus is on building skills and confidence rather than solely on academic achievement. All staff members are trained in emotion coaching, enabling them to engage in co-regulation with young people. This means that staff can anticipate how students are feeling and how they may react, allowing for timely interventions that help students regain their composure and focus. When behaviour issues do arise, the school employs a system of a maximum of 'three negatives' during a lesson to guide their response.

Once a student is regulated, the emphasis shifts to problem-solving, allowing them to return to the learning environment with a clearer mindset. Every lesson at Inspire Academy is treated as a fresh start, enabling students to arrive with a 'clean slate' and the opportunity to engage positively with their learning. This approach reinforces the idea that each lesson is a new chance for success, helping to build resilience and a positive attitude towards education.

In cases where a student has a particularly challenging day, the school has established a protocol to avoid suspension whenever possible. If a student requires multiple removals in a single day, the school implements a twilight session from 2 to 4 pm, where the student works with a dedicated staff member. This restorative reflective session allows the student to catch up on missed work and reflect on their behaviour in a supportive environment. While suspensions are available as a last resort, Inspire Academy strives to maintain positive relationships with students and avoid further alienation from the school community. When a student faces suspension, parents are invited to attend an integration meeting, which serves as a reflective process for both the student and their family. This collaborative approach ensures that parents are engaged in their child's education and behaviour management, reinforcing the importance of a united front in supporting the student's development.

Inspire Academy places a strong emphasis on involving parents throughout the transition process and beyond. The process of integrating students who may have faced significant challenges in their previous educational settings is handled with care and sensitivity. For example, a Year 10 student who had not attended school for 15 months was welcomed into the school through a bespoke transition process. The initial steps included a parent meeting to discuss the student's needs, followed by a tour of the school and a fitting for their uniform. During the first week, the student attended only the first two lessons until break, gradually increasing their time in school as they adjusted to the new environment. This careful, incremental approach recognises the significant changes the student is experiencing and allows for a smoother transition back into education.

The culture of Inspire Academy is built on the principles of safety, trust, and mutual respect. By creating an environment where students feel secure and valued, the academy encourages positive behaviour and a strong attitude towards learning. The relational approach adopted by staff fosters meaningful connections with students, allowing them to feel comfortable expressing their needs and challenges. This



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supportive atmosphere is crucial for effective behaviour management and personal development, as it empowers young people to take responsibility for their actions and learn from their experiences.

Opportunities to gauge how students are feeling are integrated into the daily routine, particularly during breakfast time. Mentoring meetings held each morning allow staff to establish strong relationships with students, enabling them to understand how each young person is feeling as they arrive at school. This proactive approach ensures that any issues can be addressed promptly, fostering a sense of community and support.

Inspire Academy employs a points system to encourage positive behaviour, allowing students to earn rewards for their efforts and achievements. This system promotes accountability and encourages students to take pride in their accomplishments. Students take great pride in this approach as they can also earn 'prizes' when they save up their points. Communication with parents is a key component of this approach, with staff using work phones to celebrate success and equally create avenues for discussion if a pupil needed to have a 'negative'. For example, if a parent mentions that their child was feeling unhappy that morning, staff can promptly follow up with the student to provide additional support.

At the end of each day, staff conduct check-ins to triangulate the messages that go home, ensuring that parents are kept informed about their child's progress and any concerns that may arise. This open line of communication reinforces the partnership between the school and families, creating a supportive network that benefits the students.

In summary, Inspire Academy's approach to behaviour, attitudes to learning, and personal development is comprehensive and deeply embedded in its ethos. By establishing clear expectations, providing personalised support, and fostering a culture of openness and trust, the school ensures that all students have the opportunity to succeed academically and develop essential life skills. This holistic approach not only addresses the immediate needs of students but also prepares them for future challenges, equipping them with the tools they need to navigate adulthood successfully. Through its commitment to nurturing behaviour and fostering positive attitudes, Inspire Academy is dedicated to creating a thriving learning environment for its young people.

Next Steps:

- Deep role (AW) 2025-26 to grow the Student Voice/ Student Action groups with a focus on further develop the praise and reward policy. Deep role (DWe) 2025-26 to develop a Behaviour for Learning curriculum across both Key Stages that explicitly teaches students the social and emotional habits needed to succeed in school and life.



Element 7 - Parents, Carers and Guardians

Inspire Academy places a strong emphasis on building positive relationships with parents, carers, and guardians, recognising that their involvement is crucial to the success of students. The journey with pupils and their families is a collaborative one, the overwhelming sentiment among parents is one of positivity regarding the progress their children make at the school. This is especially significant given that many families have previously experienced a cycle of suspension and isolation, often leading to negative associations with school settings. At Inspire Academy, the focus is on delivering uplifting messages home, which helps to foster a more supportive and encouraging attitude to school.

Staff members are equipped with phones that allow them to communicate with parents throughout the day, sending positive texts and updates about their child's achievements and behaviour. This proactive approach to communication ensures that parents are kept informed and engaged in their child's educational journey. The emphasis on positivity not only strengthens the relationship between the school and families but also reinforces the students' sense of belonging.

The school hosts regular parents' evenings, which are well attended and provide an opportunity for families to hear positive feedback about their children. The structure of these evenings' alternates between face-to-face meetings and written reports, ensuring that parents receive comprehensive updates on their child's progress. Over the course of the academic year, families receive six touchpoints, allowing for ongoing communication and engagement. One particularly heartwarming example of the impact of this communication is the story of a student who had never received positive recognition for their work before joining Inspire Academy. After receiving praise and acknowledgment for their efforts, the parent expressed immense gratitude, calling the school to share their happiness. This illustrates how Inspire Academy not only focuses on academic progress but also prioritises the emotional well-being of its students, ensuring that they feel valued and appreciated.

Parents feel comfortable reaching out to the school, knowing that their concerns will be addressed with care and attention. One parent shared their experience of having a child with a challenging educational history who joined Inspire Academy. From the outset, they found the school to be incredibly supportive, with their child always having a trusted person to turn to for help. The parent praised the head teacher for being responsive and approachable, expressing confidence that the school is always acting in the best interests of the pupils. This level of trust is essential in fostering a positive relationship between the school and families, as it encourages open dialogue and collaboration. The parent described Inspire Academy as an "incredible environment," noting that their child has undergone a remarkable transformation since joining the school. They highlighted the significant impact the academy has had on their child's self-esteem and confidence. This transformation is a testament to the nurturing and supportive atmosphere that the school cultivates, allowing students to flourish both academically and personally.

In addition to academic support, Inspire Academy places a strong emphasis on family support. Understanding that many families face financial challenges, the school provides all students with a free uniform, ensuring that they feel comfortable and presentable without the added pressure of financial burden. This initiative not only promotes equality among students but also reinforces the school's commitment to inclusivity.

Furthermore, all students are offered a free breakfast and a nutritious school meal, regardless of their financial status. The academy collaborates with local food banks and businesses, such as Greggs, to secure weekly donations that help sustain this



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programme. By providing these essential services, Inspire Academy ensures that students start their day with the nourishment they need to focus on their learning.

The school's focus on building strong relationships with parents is further reinforced through regular feedback and opportunities for involvement. By creating a welcoming environment where parents feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and concerns, Inspire Academy cultivates a partnership that benefits both students and their families. This open communication fosters a sense of belonging and support, which is essential for the emotional well-being of young people.

In conclusion, Inspire Academy's approach to engaging parents, carers, and guardians is a vital aspect of its inclusive ethos. By prioritising positive communication, fostering strong relationships, and involving families in the educational process, the school creates a supportive environment where students can thrive. The transformative experiences shared by parents highlight the profound impact that Inspire Academy has on the lives of its young people, reinforcing the importance of collaboration between the school and families in achieving positive outcomes. Through its commitment to nurturing these relationships, Inspire Academy not only enhances the educational experience for students but also empowers families to play an active role in their child's development.

Next Steps:

- To formalise regular opportunities for feedback from staff, student voice and parent/ carer voice. Building on the opportunities established last year to create a more formalised approach to gathering feedback from a range of stakeholders through both formal and informal routes. To ensure formal parent feedback is captured at the three parents evenings using questions adapted from Ofsted and to provide more informal opportunities for parents to visit school at open mornings/afternoons calendared through the year. To create a parent voice group who could be a sounding board for new ideas and regular feedback throughout the year.



Element 8 - Links with Local, Wider and Global Community

Inspire Academy has established itself as a vital hub within the local, wider, and global community, actively engaging in initiatives that support young people and their families. One of the school's notable achievements is its proactive approach to supporting young carers, which has earned it the Young Carers Award. By recognising the unique challenges faced by these students, Inspire Academy demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusivity and the well-being of all young people. This recognition not only highlights the school's dedication to addressing the needs of vulnerable students but also reinforces its role as a supportive community resource.

The school's involvement in the Alternative Provision (AP) Network within York further enhances its commitment to inclusivity. This network brings together smaller, unregistered alternative provisions, allowing them to share experiences, training, and best practices. Such collaboration strengthens the support available to students across various settings and promotes a wider impact within the community. By participating in this network, Inspire Academy contributes to a collective effort to improve educational outcomes for young people who may struggle in mainstream environments.

In addition to its educational initiatives, Inspire Academy is involved in various programmes that address the mental well-being of its students. One such initiative is 'Menfulness,' which focuses on promoting mental health awareness among young men. This programme exemplifies the school's commitment to addressing the diverse needs of its students and fostering a culture of openness around mental health issues. By providing targeted support and resources, Inspire Academy empowers young people to take charge of their mental well-being and develop resilience in the face of challenges.

The school also facilitates opportunities for students to gain valuable work experience, particularly for those in Year 11. For instance, one student who began at Inspire Academy last year had the chance to spend one day a week at a primary school within the Trust, where she explored her aspiration to become a PE teacher. This experience not only transformed her confidence but also enabled her to engage with younger pupils, enhancing her professional skills and sense of purpose. Such opportunities illustrate Inspire Academy's commitment to facilitating meaningful transitions for its students, ensuring they are well-prepared for their future careers.

Inspire Academy maintains strong relationships with local further education institutions, such as York College, which offers agricultural courses and supported internships for students with EHCPs. These connections provide students with access to a range of educational pathways and career opportunities, further enhancing their prospects for success. The school actively encourages students to participate in careers fairs, ensuring they are informed about the various options available to them as they transition into adulthood.

The academy also collaborates with organisations such as Inspire Youth, which comes into the school to deliver forest school programmes. This partnership provides students with opportunities to engage in outdoor learning experiences that promote personal growth and development. Additionally, Yorkshire Mentoring is involved in initiatives focused on knife crime awareness and risky behaviour, offering training for staff and hosting parent events to educate families on how to keep their children safe. These programmes are essential in addressing the challenges faced by young people in today's society, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions.

Inspire Academy is committed to addressing anti-social behaviour through partnerships with local agencies. The school collaborates with the Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) to provide hard-hitting support and education on issues such as joint enterprise



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and fighting. This proactive approach ensures that students are aware of the consequences of their actions and are equipped with strategies to avoid engaging in negative behaviours. The school also offers one-on-one sessions for students who have been involved in incidents with the law, providing them with the support they need to make positive changes in their lives.

The school prioritises the well-being of its staff as well, with external agencies coming in once a term to provide training and resources related to mental health and well-being. This support not only benefits the students but also fosters a culture of care and understanding among staff members, ensuring they are equipped to handle the challenges that arise in their roles. The collaborative network of agencies surrounding Inspire Academy strengthens its safeguarding practices, allowing for effective communication and support when concerns arise.

In summary, Inspire Academy's links with the local, wider, and global community are integral to its mission of providing inclusive education and support for all young people. Through its proactive initiatives, partnerships with local organisations, and commitment to training future educators, the academy plays a vital role in addressing the diverse needs of its students and their families. By fostering a culture of collaboration and support, Inspire Academy not only enhances the educational experiences of its young people but also empowers them to become responsible, engaged members of society. This holistic approach ensures that all students have the opportunity to thrive academically and personally, preparing them for a successful future.

Next Steps:

- To sustain and grow further a local AP network, allowing collaboration with other schools and institutions to provide the best possible opportunities for all young people. To visit national examples of good practice. To increase opportunities for students to participate in local, regional, national and international events further building their cultural capital.