



SPRINGFIELD<sup>®</sup>  
SCHOOL



Challenge Partners Review  
November 2018

**‘Challenge Partners enables collaboration  
between schools to enhance the life chances of  
all children in an ever-changing world’**

[www.challengepartners.org](http://www.challengepartners.org)





Dear Trustees and Governors

It is with great pleasure that I present to you Springfield School's Challenge Partners Review Report for 2018. We are delighted that the review team again found our work to be 'GOOD' across the board and specifically for 'School Improvement Strategies', 'Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment' and 'Outcomes' (results).

As you will recall, Challenge Partners is a Charity, the mission of which is '... to improve pupils' outcomes and reduce educational inequality through effective collaboration, enabling every pupil to experience the combined wisdom of the education system.'

Challenge Partners has adopted four core aims. To:

- 'Improve pupils' examination results at a rate above the national average and accelerate progress of the disadvantaged
- Enable all our schools to improve at a rate above the national average
- Create more national leaders and outstanding schools that fulfil the Teaching Schools criteria
- Develop a world class, self-improving and sustainable system that contributes to national research and policy-making'

Springfield's review took place over three days (19th-21st November). Review activities included joint observations of lessons across the full age and subject range, pupil voice discussions, meetings with middle and senior leaders and detailed scrutiny of the school's GCSE and assessment results. The review team consisted of a highly qualified and experienced team: the Vice Principal of an 11-18 school in Kent, an Assistant Headteacher from an 11-18 academy in London, the Executive Headteacher of a Special Schools consortium (KS1-5) in Kent and a Headteacher from an 11-16 girls' school in Northamptonshire; the Lead Reviewer had over 30 years of experience in Education, including working as an HMI.

The extremely positive report reflects the hard work and dedication of the staff team who strive constantly to improve outcomes across the board for our pupils. I thank them sincerely for what they do to enhance the life chances of our community's children.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sara Spivey'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sara Spivey

CEO, The De Curci Trust

Headteacher, Springfield School

‘A striking feature of many lessons is the way students debate sensibly, settle easily to learning independently or collaborate effectively to research or investigate.’



## 1. Context and character of the school

Springfield is a larger-than-average, non-selective secondary school for students aged 11 to 16, located in the north of Portsmouth. It converted to academy status in April 2017 and was a founding academy of The De Curci Trust, which includes a local infant and junior school.

Most students are of White British heritage and the proportion that speak English as an additional language is below the national average. The proportion of students eligible for pupil premium funding is also below average but has been increasing year on year. The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.

Students begin their GCSE subjects in Year 9 and all have access to the EBacc subjects. The majority of students study, in addition to the core subjects, GCSEs in computing (or equivalent in ICT), humanities, and a modern foreign language (French or German).


The school has a wide range of partnerships including with local businesses, the teaching school alliance as well as Portsmouth and Chichester Universities.

The school's aims are to:

- Create aspirational students for whom success and the pursuit of excellence is an expectation.
- Empower our students to maximise their potential and develop the skills they need to live independent and happy lives.
- Provide a relevant academic curriculum which supports students to become responsible citizens, well equipped for the technological and global society in which they will live.
- Develop system leadership at all levels and ensure that it drives creativity and improvement across the school.
- Increase further the occurrence of 'outstanding' teaching across the school.

### 2.1 School Improvement Strategies - Progress from previous EBIs

- Leaders responded well to the previous EBIs. Most teachers are now using information from assessments to identify the key skills that students need to move forward in their learning. The three levels of improvement planning – departmental, year group and 'subject/year office review' – are aligned and focus well on student outcomes, including for different groups.
- The school has clearly identified the barriers to learning for disadvantaged students and put in place strategies to overcome them, with much success. However, leaders recognise that raising the achievement of disadvantaged students is still a priority for the school.



**‘Leaders have high expectations of staff and students and have created a friendly and purposeful learning environment.’**

## 2.2 School Improvement Strategies - What went well

- Senior leaders have worked relentlessly in the drive for continuous improvement in school performance. They provide clear direction and effective support for staff and model professional working relationships well. Their determination, good humour and hard work set the tone for the whole school.
- The school knows itself well and its self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders have high expectations of staff and students and have created a friendly and purposeful learning environment.
- Senior leaders have successfully promoted a culture of support and challenge for teachers. They have developed effective systems to do this, such as a middle leader development programme, which enables emerging leaders to take on more challenging roles. One of the outcomes of their approach is that retention of staff has been relatively good.
- Staff benefit from an extensive professional development programme that arises from needs identified during monitoring and appraisal. Several members of staff are involved in research activities and frequently coach fellow teachers and support staff in good practice.
- Students' performance in tests and examinations is closely analysed to identify the underachievement of individuals and groups in each subject. Regular meetings about students' progress identify gaps in students' learning and the extra support they need. Department heads are held accountable for the consequent strategic response they develop.
- The school has developed a range of intervention and support strategies for vulnerable groups. There is a clear sense that all teachers are responsible for ensuring that disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs and/or disability make strong progress. Findings from 'challenge the gap' research in school are beginning to be used to support disadvantaged students. This bespoke approach is having a positive effect; their attendance is improving, and the achievement gaps are diminishing.
- The school has generated strong links with its feeder primary schools that smooth students' transition between phases. Several subject departments link with primary schools to carry out moderation exercises or to share resources and expertise.
- Leaders have established a clear rationale for the curriculum. Students benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum with a strong emphasis on EBacc subjects in Key Stage 4. They appreciate the subjects they are offered and the range of educational trips and opportunities that are available. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education and there are effective links with the local colleges and universities.
- Leaders give excellent weight to students' voice through annual attitudinal surveys and opportunities in the student council where students lead various committees. Students are also encouraged to teach their peers during 'period six'; they explained how valuable they found this.

**‘Teachers make good use of tutor time  
for a variety of purposes, such as  
understanding the modern world and  
keeping safe and healthy.’**





## 2.3 School Improvement Strategies - Even better if...

...leaders continue to focus on improving outcomes for disadvantaged students and boys.

...middle leaders were given more opportunities to visit and learn from other schools beyond Springfield and the local area.

...leaders ensured that school policies, such as for assessment, were implemented consistently by all staff, with the excellent practice that exists in Springfield shared more widely.

## 3.1 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Progress from previous EBIs

- Leaders have responded well to address the EBIs from the last review. For example, teachers now have higher expectations of students' written work and make more appropriate use of worksheets. As a consequence, students generally take good care of their exercise books and present their work well.
- The developing concept of a 'flight path' is helping teachers to identify and communicate to students the precise skills that they need to make strong progress in their learning. It also helps teachers plan and adapt lessons to meet the needs of different groups of students. However, school leaders recognise there is still work to be done to ensure that the 'flight path' concept is used effectively by all teachers.
- Teachers make good use of tutor time for a variety of purposes, such as understanding the modern world and keeping safe and healthy. The tutor period 'sets us off well for the day', said one student. Activities also include opportunities to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills. Year 7 have regular accelerated reader sessions that are helping to improve their reading, comprehension skills and vocabulary.

**‘Teachers have established strong relationships with their students so that behaviour for learning is very positive and most students remain engaged throughout lessons.’**



## 3.2 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - What went well

- Through strong support, challenge and regular monitoring, the headteacher and senior leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching remains high.
- Teachers have established strong relationships with their students so that behaviour for learning is very positive and most students remain engaged throughout lessons. Students feel safe and are confident enough to ask questions in class.
- Students say that their teachers are approachable and very helpful, for example, when mathematics teachers explain difficult concepts in different ways to aid understanding.
- School leaders' and teachers' focus on effective questioning is paying dividends. As a result, students are thinking more deeply and gaining confidence in expressing their own ideas. Disadvantaged students, in particular, are benefitting from the targeted questioning.
- Students are given good opportunities to develop their oracy skills. Many students spoke assuredly and demonstrated strong articulacy and good vocabularies.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and most plan their lessons well to stretch students of different abilities. Well-considered, engaging resources are often introduced to stimulate interest and discussion. In a well-designed science lesson, for example, Year 11 students worked together very well and responsibly in small groups carrying out chemical tests.
- Teachers generally use time well. In most lessons, students start their learning promptly, for example, with 'do now' tasks, and activities are timed appropriately to maintain students' interest.
- A striking feature of many lessons is the way students debate sensibly, settle easily to learning independently or collaborate effectively to research or investigate.
- Teachers often provide detailed and constructive feedback to students, including advice on how to improve their examination techniques, or extension questions to further develop students' thinking.
- Teachers are beginning to introduce the concept of a 'flight path', linking students' learning to their progress towards a GCSE grade. Students, particularly in Key Stage 4, are gaining a better understanding of their progress and the precise skills they need to improve. In some subjects, students receive clear information about the gaps in their learning indicated by their performance in module tests.


## 3.3 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Even better if...

...the really strong and effective use of questioning by some teachers was disseminated more widely.

...all teachers ensured that students were given time to respond to their written feedback, as practice is currently inconsistent.

...students in all subjects from Year 7 onwards were helped to understand the 'flight path' concept and to recognise the next steps needed to make progress.

...teachers provided more challenge for students of all ability levels.

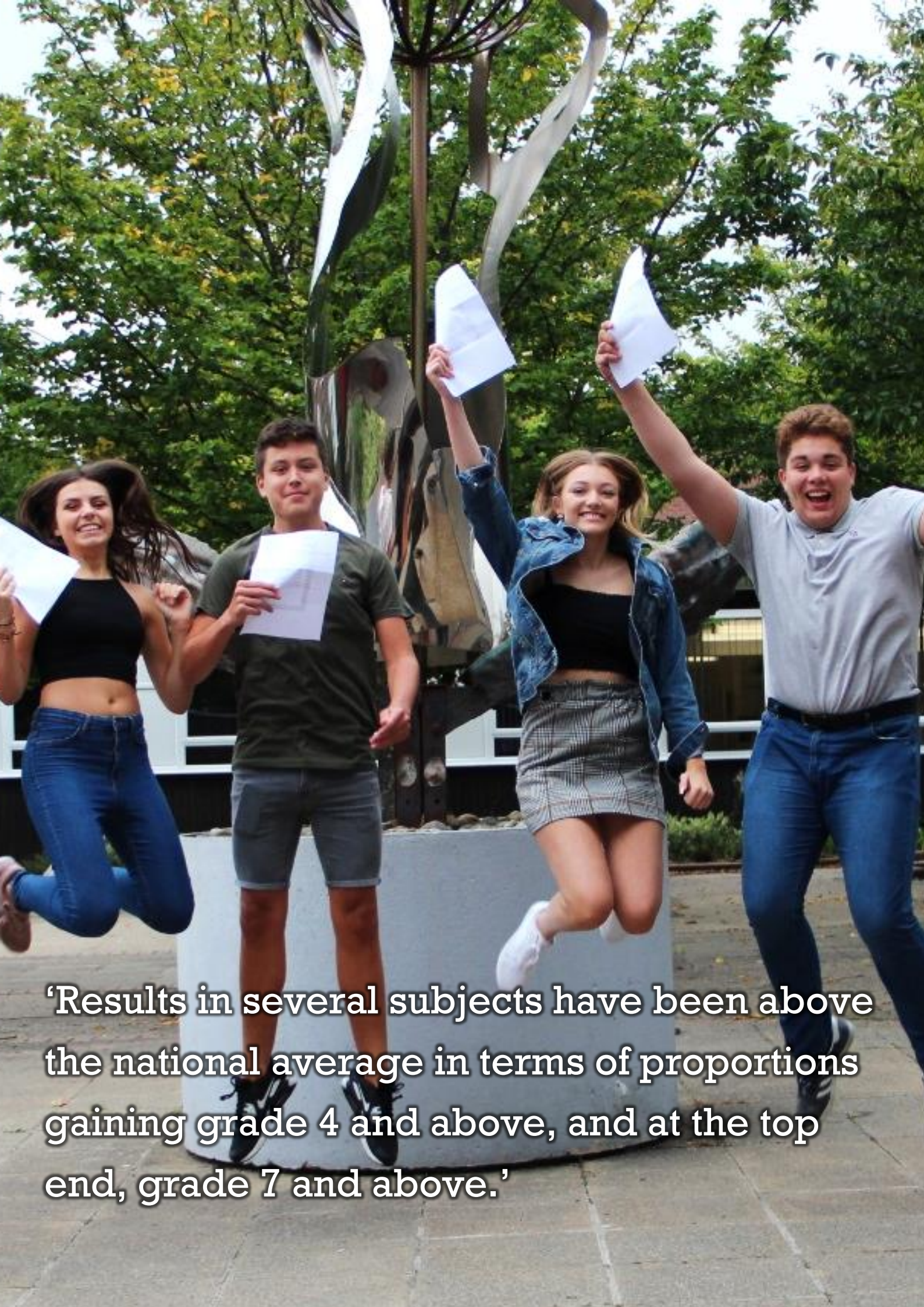
A young man with brown hair, wearing a black school uniform with a white shirt and a red tie, is looking through a white and black microscope. He is holding a blue folder. The background is a blurred classroom setting with other students and a pink flower.

'A very high proportion of students are entered for the EBacc and their results have been above the national average.

Progress 8 for EBacc subjects was in the top 20% of schools in 2017'

## 4. Outcomes for Pupils

- The school has maintained its strong GCSE results at the end of Key Stage 4 over the past few years. In 2018, there were improvements in the average GCSE grade and higher proportion of students reached grade 5 and above in English and mathematics compared with 2017. Results in several subjects have been above the national average in terms of proportions gaining grade 4 and above, and at the top end, grade 7 and above. For example, results in geography, English, mathematics, separate sciences, computer science, art and design, and music were particularly strong in 2018.
- A very high proportion of students are entered for the EBacc and their results have been above the national average. Progress 8 for EBacc subjects was in the top 20% of schools in 2017. 2018 results have yet to be validated.
- Leaders have given a high priority to improving the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students. Their attainment has improved. For example, a higher proportion achieved a standard pass in English and in mathematics in 2018, compared with 2017, and this reduced the gap with the national average for other students.
- Progress 8 dropped in 2018 from above average in 2017 to be in line with the national average. Girls have made significantly stronger progress than boys in the last two years. School leaders are well aware of the need to improve boys' attainment and progress. Their strategies, which include greater involvement of parents and targeted support, are beginning to have a positive impact, as the progress of boys currently indicates they are 'catching up'.
- Most of the current students are making steady and appropriate progress towards attaining or exceeding the school's minimum expectations. Progress measures indicate that students' progress is better than it was at the same point last year. Although there is evidence that the gap between disadvantaged students and others is diminishing, the improvement is inconsistent across subjects and year groups.
- The school has given reading and literacy a high profile. The use of the accelerated reader programme is having a positive impact on improving younger students' reading ages. Students' oracy skills are also developing well. Many students demonstrate confidence in speaking in public, with clarity of speech and rich vocabularies.



**‘Results in several subjects have been above the national average in terms of proportions gaining grade 4 and above, and at the top end, grade 7 and above.’**

## Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising of host school leaders and visiting reviewers agree that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

<b>School Improvement Strategies</b>	GOOD
<b>Outcomes for Pupils</b>	GOOD
<b>Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment</b>	GOOD
<b>Area of Excellence</b>	Not applicable
<b>Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence</b>	None identified
<b>Overall Estimate</b>	GOOD

*Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.*

More information about Challenge Partners can be accessed via  
<https://www.challengepartners.org>



[www.springfield.uk.net](http://www.springfield.uk.net)

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