

# Sir Robert Woodard Academy

Upper Boundstone Lane, Sompting BN15 9QZ

<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 December 2015
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This a school that requires improvement

- GCSE results in 2015 were low, particularly in mathematics and science. The percentage of high grades was well below average because the most-able pupils were not challenged enough.
- In a few subjects, pupils are not making the rapid progress necessary for them to overcome underachievement in the past.
- A small number of subject leaders have yet to lead their teams as effectively as most do.
- A few parents of Key Stage 3 pupils are not happy with the reports they receive about their child's progress.
- Until September 2015, too much teaching failed to generate good learning; assessments of pupils' progress were inaccurate.
- Teaching sometimes fails to provide good progress for pupils in one or more of the following groups: boys, disadvantaged pupils, low attainers and those who have special educational needs.
- The academy's action plan is long and not precise enough about the key actions needed.
- A few pupils do not behave well in lessons and some do not present their work neatly.

### The school has the following strengths

- Since the previous inspection, the Principal has eliminated inadequate teaching and established a strong and effective senior leadership team. The Vice Principal is experienced and efficient.
- The re-structured Academy Council (governing body) is very well led and effective. Members fully back the Principal's work but also probe it in depth.
- Several new and enthusiastic subject leaders, greater stability and more subject specialists are together generating better teaching and learning.
- Achievement is improving for underachieving groups and in science. Assessments and predictions of progress are far more accurate.
- Pupils achieve well in English and GCSE pass rates are above average in sports, the performing arts and work-related subjects.
- The sixth form is good. Sixth formers are good role models for pupils. An increasing number go on to university.
- Pupils are well cared for and feel safe. Many behave well, work hard and enjoy their lessons.
- The academy's 'Pillars of Learning' (described later) make a strong contribution to the thoughtful and effective provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The academy's work in the community is outstanding and imaginative.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in all years to improve GCSE and sixth form results and to achieve more of the high grades by:
  - insisting, in both mixed-ability or setted classes, that lower attainers have work they can manage and the most able have work which is not too easy for them
  - checking that subject leaders and teachers monitor boys' and disadvantaged pupils' progress to identify those who are not doing well enough as early as possible
  - intensifying academic support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
  - promoting numeracy in more subjects to support improvements in mathematics.
- Increase the proportion of teaching and learning that is good or better by:
  - making sure that pupils take on board the verbal and written comments they receive about how to improve their work
  - monitoring lesson time to ensure that it is not wasted when pupils finish work quickly
  - helping pupils to see the importance of neat writing and diagrams in their work
  - checking that homework is set according to the academy's policy and that all pupils can access it, and complete it.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - monitoring whether all teachers follow the academy's behaviour and marking policies consistently
  - further promoting sharing of good practice in leadership of subjects and teaching expertise
  - refining the action plan and some review documents
  - reviewing how reports are presented to parents and helping them to understand them.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Having been in post several months before the previous inspection, the Principal already knew what needed to be done to develop excellence in the academy's work. It took a while to tackle inadequate teaching or behaviour and to appoint enthusiastic specialist subject leaders and teachers. The Principal has achieved a great deal in the last two years. His skills are complemented by an equally dedicated and determined Vice Principal and several recently appointed assistant principals. All the systems are in place for the academy to make great strides forward and to gain the recognition it deserves for its already successful areas.
- A few documents, however, particularly the academy's action plan and the middle leaders' subject evaluation forms, are too long to be crystal clear about the immediate priorities. It is good that assessment arrangements, linked to statements about the progress pupils should make over time, are the same in all subjects. They are generating a clearer picture of different pupils' achievement, although a few pupils say they do not always understand how well they are doing.
- Senior, and well-trained middle leaders, evaluate the quality of teaching and learning accurately and know which teachers need support to teach really well. The professional support for all staff, including newly qualified teachers, has improved significantly; many attend voluntary early-morning sessions to share good practice and ideas. Experienced and effective subject leaders, especially the English leader, are supporting recently appointed leaders but more time is needed for this to percolate down into lessons.
- In two terms last year, the new science and mathematics leaders raised standards in Years 7 to 10 but could not address the effect of poor teaching in the past for those taking GCSEs. The new leader for humanities, which has many new teachers, is fully aware that, for example, geography teaching is not sharp enough. The new modern foreign languages leader has organised visits and work experience abroad along with immersion language events: there are now more language groups opting for French and Spanish in Years 9 to 11.
- One key step forward this year is far tighter allocation and evaluation of how pupil premium funds are spent. All members of staff, particularly senior and middle leaders, are responsible for overseeing disadvantaged pupils' progress. They check, for example, whether the learning support units or one-to-one mathematics sessions are making a positive difference. In the past, disadvantaged pupils were entered for fewer GCSEs than others and could not always find option subjects to match their interests; both situations have been rectified this year.
- The curriculum is in a state of flux because both Years 9 and 10 have started their Key Stage 4 work this year (the former with an increased choice of option subjects). This has a knock-on effect on Years 7 and 8, where Key Stage 3 work is now being taught in two years. Senior leaders are determined that these changes must contribute to improved progress in lessons. The changes reflect the academy's enthusiasm to offer subjects which will prepare pupils well for their future lives.
- Other good curriculum changes are the introduction of the three separate sciences, which will suit most-able pupils, and the introduction of Spanish so that more pupils are now studying a foreign language. Significantly enhancing the curriculum is a wealth of sporting and performance activities – musicians in the orchestra play with accuracy and verve. Trips, visits and external speakers further enrich pupils' experiences and broaden their horizons.
- Careers advice and guidance is of a high quality and also contributes to pupils' social development, for example by listening to external speakers from industry or learning about life skills such as taxation. Pupils visit universities to raise their aspirations. The academy has applied for a 'democracy award' to reflect its work with the local Youth Parliament. One day each year is spent considering the impact of wars. Pupils mark Remembrance day and share relatives' stories.
- To prepare pupils to acquire skills that are relevant and transferable to their future lives, the 'Pillars of Learning' (knowing, communicating, questioning, collaborating, making and persisting) underpin the academy's work on personal, social, health and economic education and citizenship and British values. Pupils fundraise generously for several local charities and contribute in numerous ways to the local community.
- Staff morale is high, with much support for the academy's culture and aspirations. In the staff questionnaire, over 80% felt that the academy was better than it had been two years ago and all felt that pupils were safe. Staff and parents are not so confident about how poor behaviour is dealt with.

However, inspectors saw very few incidents of thoughtless or silly behaviour.

- A small number of parents of Key Stage 3 pupils have concerns about the format of the progress reports. They find them too generic and difficult to understand. Some pupils also said that teachers do not interpret the assessment descriptors in the same way. Year 8 pupils said that teachers used 'developing' in different ways, though they described the English descriptors as 'really good'. Parents also have concerns about the increase in the number of mixed-ability classes; during the inspection these worked well in most English lessons but were less successful in mathematics. Parents can be assured that senior leaders are keeping the teaching groups under review.
- Parents with pupils in Years 9–11 are more likely to recall the aspects of weak teaching in the past. A parent of a Year 7 pupil who is 'over the moon' with how well her son is progressing observed that 'he has blossomed, is coming out of his shell, and is well mannered'. The academy opens its doors to parents and the local community, showing films, hosting business breakfasts or arranging community bands.
- The Woodard Academy Trust, through a variety of consultants and a Woodard Academy Partner, has supported the academy in identifying areas that have required improvement. The academy also liaises with local outstanding schools to share good practice.
- Reflecting on the academy's past, sixth formers described how much things had improved in recent months, particularly teaching in science and other subjects. All pupils and sixth formers love the wonderful facilities which boost their enjoyment of academy life. They are right to appreciate their environment – the dance, drama and sports facilities, for example, are outstanding.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The Academy Council is led by a wise and very experienced Chair who knows the local community extremely well. He is making sure that all members of the council bring practical experience, for example in finance or education, to their deliberations.
  - It is clear that members know exactly what is going on at the academy, whether probing the allocation and effectiveness of pupil premium funds or exploring ways to improve attendance. The council is behind the Principal's arrangements for teachers' pay awards being linked to pupils' outcomes.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All policies and procedures are up to date and checked by the Academy Council, which oversees the secure recruitment procedures. The child protection officer has experience of social services work and delivers regular training to staff on safeguarding, the 'Prevent duty' and awareness of female genital mutilation. Plans are in place for 'grassroots' work with pupils on these issues.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, particularly in mixed-ability classes, some lessons are directed to the middle ability range. This means that some low attainers struggle to get to grips with the work and, even in English occasionally, the most-able pupils find work too easy and finish quickly. In the past, the most-able pupils have not been expected to achieve high standards or the top GCSE grades; although this has now changed, these pupils need to make rapid progress to fulfil their potential.
- The presentation of work by a few pupils, especially boys, is not good, with poor handwriting, untidy diagrams or incomplete tasks. Even in subjects where learning is particularly effective, teachers do not comment enough on pupils' presentation. In contrast, many pupils take pride in how they present work, are enthusiastic to learn and to do well.
- Another reason that teaching and learning are not yet good is that a few pupils occasionally chat too much. If teachers do not follow the procedures for dealing with such behaviour rigorously, pupils are not made to concentrate, their progress is interrupted and those who want to work are frustrated.
- Underpinning many successful lessons are the very positive and respectful relationships which practically all pupils have with each other and their teachers. Teachers' breadth of subject knowledge, seen in English, dance, music and physical education for example, means that many of them respond confidently to pupils' interesting or unusual questions and enjoy exploring ideas with them.
- This term there is more carefully planned work, which gives all pupils the chance to learn well because teachers regularly share good practice and learn from each other. In biology and history for example, pupils choose between three different levels of work. They say that they like this approach as it challenges them to do the best they can.
- In many sports and creative and performing arts lessons, pupils' enthusiasm contributes to successful learning and at least good progress. In English particularly, teachers ask questions which make pupils

think hard and reflect on what they have learned. In a few other subjects teachers do not pose questions to check understanding before moving on to new work, or let only a handful of pupils give most of the answers.

- Many teachers, either verbally or when marking their books, give pupils very helpful advice about how to improve their work. This guidance does not generate the progress it could if pupils ignore it or glance at it and forget the key things that they should improve.
- Homework is often set online with paper copies provided for those without internet at home. This is not always successful as sometimes pupils have difficulty accessing the work or it does not appear to have been put up online. Occasionally, it is not marked according to the academy's policy.
- Teaching assistants are mostly skilful at offering valuable support and asking questions which help pupils to articulate their understanding. They clearly realise that it is important that pupils they work with do not become too reliant on their support. Their work is matched to their individual expertise, either in subjects or particular special needs.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** is good

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Religious education lessons focus on philosophy and ethics and pupils have reflective diaries to record their thoughts on life's big questions. However, celebrations of different faiths and cultures do not have a high profile in assemblies. Staff have received training on radicalisation and extremism but have yet to explore these, and other sensitive issues, with pupils.
- Pupils are fully aware of different lifestyles and family structures. The academy is very strong on promoting tolerance and challenging homophobia and racism. Pupils had a presentation from an eye witness to the Nepalese earthquake, contributed boxes for Syrian people and have considered topics such as asylum seekers. Assemblies cover issues such as immigrants and women's rights, justice and discrimination. Tutor periods, lasting 20 minutes, give some pupils a good start to the day but, without a structured programme, it depends on individual tutors whether this time is used productively.
- E-safety has a high profile and there is tight monitoring of computer usage and contacts. Pupils know the potential dangers of social media sites. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about healthy lifestyles, such as the benefits of walking to the academy.
- Pupils who are looked after and young carers receive much emotional and practical support from staff, the academy chaplain and, where appropriate, external consultants. Staff encourage them, along with other disadvantaged pupils, to start the day by joining the breakfast club, to attend regularly and to make the most of academic and other post-school activities. Their revision guides or music lessons, for example, are paid for and many are mentored by carefully selected members of staff.
- One-third of the pupils, predominantly boys, receiving support for disabilities or special educational needs are also eligible for pupil premium funding; two-thirds of these pupils are also boys. New leadership and management of these pupils has led to better pastoral support and many of them now want to do as well as they can. Pupils struggling with reading were seen concentrating very well in a phonics sessions.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. During the inspection, it was exemplary in assemblies and in several lessons as well. It is usually just a few pupils who find it hard to concentrate and end up chatting too much or being silent but switched off. Last year, there were more boys than girls in Year 11 than in any year before or after. A small group of them, who significantly underachieved, found it particularly hard to buckle down to work.
- Bullying is rare and racist incidents are extremely rare. All pupils met during the inspection were confident that both are taken extremely seriously by staff and dealt with promptly.
- Attendance since September 2015 has been average but this disguises the fact that staff work hard to reduce the number of persistent absentees. They stress the importance of education to parents.

## **Outcomes for pupils** require improvement

- Particularly in mathematics, science, geography and computer studies, pupils, especially boys, made well below average progress towards their GCSEs in 2014 and 2015. More girls attained five good GCSE

grades, including English and mathematics. In contrast, stable and experienced teachers generated very good results in work-related courses, media studies, sports and all the performing arts subjects.

- Over 60% of pupils attained very well in their English language and literature GCSEs; diligent checking on disadvantaged pupils' work contributed to these pupils making more progress than other pupils and others nationally. There was not the same focus on the most-able pupils, so there were few A\*/A grades. Lower attainers, especially boys, did not make as good progress as the majority.
- A\*/A grades were also low in mathematics, but in this subject disadvantaged pupils' progress was weaker than other pupils and others nationally, although the gap narrowed considerably in 2015; signs are that the gap is narrowing further this year.
- The many new teachers in the subjects that have underperformed since the previous inspection are already generating better progress. Year 10 pupils took the core science GCSE examination in 2015 and attained an above national percentage of pass grades. Achievement in mathematics is gathering momentum. However, until all subjects produce good progress, outcomes require improvement.
- The academy ran a summer school in 2015 to support lower attaining pupils, and subject leaders have plans to improve boys' standards, such as writing persuasive speeches about football in English. Master classes are being run for most-able pupils and after-school sessions are run for underachievers.
- Reading and writing develop well in English lessons, with careful monitoring of the books pupils read for pleasure along with book quizzes and discussions. A book club for the most-able readers is increasingly popular. However, even in English books, pupils' spelling is not checked consistently. Other subjects contribute to these basic skills but a similar whole-academy focus on numeracy has only just got going.
- Improved academic support for disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs, and others who struggle with basic skills, is raising these pupils' achievement. Predictions for end-of-year outcomes are positive, based on the accurate assessments completed after eight weeks in the autumn term. Pupils in a Year 11 support group were seen working with exceptional focus and determination.
- In 2015, less than a handful of pupils did not proceed into education, employment or training. This reflects the academy's high-quality careers advice and effective strategies to help pupils to reflect on all aspects of their futures.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Sixth form learners passed all the A level subjects they took in 2015 but attained a lower than average percentage of high grades as their progress was not consistently good in all subjects. Staffing issues and staff absence, now addressed, contributed. In the main work-related qualification, the BTEC level 3 subsidiary diploma, taken in a range of subjects, learners made well above average progress.
- Some learners are diligent about reading the comments that teachers write and applying them to improve their work, particularly in some of the BTEC courses such as health and social care. However, many learners need help to organise their notes clearly so that they are helpful when they come to revise.
- A senior leader now works with the head of sixth form to strengthen the academic aspect of leadership and management. Tight monitoring of learners' work is generating good teaching and learning in most subjects. Learners rarely have to re-take GCSE English in Year 12 but several need to re-take mathematics – pass rates have not been good but lessons are now taken by experienced, new staff.
- Sixth formers describe the advice and guidance they received during Year 11 as helpful, citing the quality of teaching in subjects they wanted to study as reasons for staying at the academy. They also value the bespoke work experience arranged for them at a local engineering firm or hospital, for example. At the end of their time in the sixth form, practically all learners go on to university, employment or training and some have gained places on apprenticeships. Retention rates are improving.
- The curriculum consists of several popular BTEC courses and an increasing number of A levels, some of them attracting only a few learners. Nevertheless, the sixth form is growing. Senior leaders realise that the taught hours allocated to all subjects are too low (at present learners have carefully arranged study periods), so contact hours will increase next year and should raise achievement in the future.
- Despite not being familiar with the words 'British values', sixth formers understand the importance of democracy, the rule of law and tolerance in the UK. They know the name of the academy's Stonewall Champion and appreciate the academy's firm stance against homophobia and racism. They receive the same high-quality personal development as younger pupils.
- Sixth formers' awareness of less developed countries is extended by visits to, for example, Uganda or Ethiopia; they share their experiences by making presentations in assemblies.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135744
<b>Local authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10002300

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	998
<b>Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	110
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The Academy Council
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<b>Principal</b>	Peter Midwinter
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1–2 October 2013

## Information about this school

- In the last two years there have been numerous staffing changes, including senior and middle leaders and many new teachers.
- The academy is an average sized 11–18 school with a sixth form that is increasing in size.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium is average. The pupil premium is government funding for looked after children and pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Over nine out of ten pupils are of White British heritage with very small proportions of pupils from many minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for disabilities and special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very low.
- The academy does not use any alternative educational provision.
- The academy received the Investors in Careers award in September 2015.
- The academy meets the government’s current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in over 40 part-lessons. Many lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. In practically all lessons, inspectors looked at pupils' work in books.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and talked to others informally during breaktimes. Discussions were held with pastoral and academic senior and middle leaders and staff. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Academy Council, the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Woodard Academies Trust, the Academy Improvement Partner and a consultant supporting the academy's work.
- Inspectors took account of 14 parents' written comments and 54 parents' responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered responses to online questionnaires completed by 77 members of staff, and 70 completed by pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's action plans for 2015–2016, reviews of teaching and learning, the academy's and subjects' self-evaluation, standards and progress information, predictions for 2016 results, behaviour and attendance records and a range of policies.

## Inspection team

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Sally Dennison	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Walshe	Ofsted Inspector

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