

The Littlehampton Academy

Fitzalan Road, Littlehampton, West Sussex BN17 6FE

Inspection dates

2–3 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Requires improvement |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Requires improvement |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Requires improvement |
| Outcomes for pupils | Requires improvement |
| 16 to 19 study programmes | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Inadequate |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' GCSE results in 2014 to 2015 were well below average. Pupils are now making better progress overall, including in English, but achievement varies between subjects and year groups. This is because teaching is not consistently good across the school.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics and science is improving, but at a slower rate than other subjects. Boys are making less progress than girls during Key Stage 4 in these subjects.
- Despite narrowing, a gap remains between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and others in the school and nationally.
- A minority of pupils do not work hard or have good attitudes to working, particularly in Year 9; behaviour therefore requires improvement.
- The instability of middle leadership in some subjects continues to hamper improvements in teaching and outcomes.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils about how to improve their work is not always consistently effective.

The school has the following strengths

- Leadership moved into a higher gear in January following the appointment of the Acting Principal. He immediately strengthened the senior leadership team, began to rapidly improve teaching and took steps to restore parents' and staff's confidence.
- The academy council is very well led, knowledgeable and determined to see the school improve.
- Care and support for all pupils' welfare is good, thoughtful and well organised.
- Pupils behave sensibly around the school and are polite. They feel safe and secure. Sixth formers are good role models for them.
- With stronger teaching than in the main school, sixth form learners study well, make good progress and are well prepared for their future lives.
- The Scott Centre (for pupils with autism), and a Year 7 transition group, strengthen these pupils' confidence to be involved in school life.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To improve achievement:
 - accelerate pupils' progress further, particularly in science and mathematics
 - make sure the gap between disadvantaged pupils' achievement and others' reduces further
 - address the gaps between girls' and boys' progress in science and mathematics during Key Stage 4.

- To strengthen the effectiveness of teaching and learning:
 - share the good practice that exists in several subjects, for example in preparing work that supports lower attainers and challenges the most able
 - ensure that the school's behaviour policy is followed so that pupils, particularly in Year 9, have the right attitudes to learning
 - focus more support on those teachers whose lessons do not consistently generate good learning
 - improve the effectiveness of teachers' feedback so all pupils know what to do to improve their work.

- Strengthen middle leadership for departments which lack experienced and/or stable leadership.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The new Acting Principal has begun to transform the school rapidly. Close to nine out of ten members of staff who responded to the online questionnaire feel that the school has improved since its last inspection but that the pace has quickened this year. Their numerous positive comments included that, 'The beat of the school is different', 'We now have inspirational leadership' and 'I feel more confident than ever before'.
- Staff morale is high and pupils pick this up in their lessons and school life. A Year 9 pupil observed that, 'Our new headteacher is strict but nice; he keeps things organised'. The school's capacity to move forward rapidly is improving and secure. The Acting Principal is supported very well by the Vice Principal and the Woodard Trust's chief education officer, acting as the Executive Principal for the school.
- Changes to the senior leadership team in March 2015 sowed some seeds for the rapid and increasingly successful actions taken by the enlarged, restructured team in January 2016. However, leadership and management require improvement because middle leadership is underdeveloped in some subjects. For example, there is no long-term leader for mathematics, a recently appointed science leader is not yet in post and the English and geography leaders are new in post. Guidance for staff from the inclusion team and the recently qualified special educational needs coordinator, about how teachers can best support particular pupils' progress, is not embedded and applied consistently.
- In addition, turbulence generated by a rapid turnover of staff in the past has yet to be overcome. Despite several new, effective teachers, the school has to employ a few teachers who lack experience of the English education system or are on long-term supply, and use non-specialist staff in some subjects. Nevertheless, all these teachers are keen to promote good progress; for example, a non-specialist teacher showed enthusiasm to rapidly assimilate the subject knowledge needed. Recruitment and retention is far better than in the past and every possible action is being taken to secure greater stability.
- Senior leaders rightly check whether teachers have assessed pupils' work accurately and use external verification at key points for some core and a few other subjects, mostly in Years 10 and 11.
- Senior leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching is accurate so they know exactly where support is needed. They deliver high-quality training for staff. They are aware of the subjects which need to generate higher outcomes, hence senior leaders line manage them and one leads mathematics. The strong leadership and teaching expertise, evident in several subjects, has been shared across the school to spread this good practice. However, it has not generated improved teaching quickly enough in a few subjects, for example science.
- The curriculum is well balanced. Valuable lessons in citizenship, and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) will expand into Years 10 and 11 in the next academic year. Pupils have choices: they learn some French and Spanish in Year 7 and choose one to continue. They select from a good range of creative and technology subjects in Year 9. A transition group is very effective for the lowest Year 7 attainers.
- At Key Stage 4, most pupils, including all of the most able, take at least one humanities subject and a language. Pupils can still study two languages up to GCSE if they wish and the most able can opt for the three separate GCSE sciences. A few, unsuccessful, Level 1 qualifications have been removed and the remaining work-related courses generate worthwhile qualifications. Work experience in Year 10 is being reintroduced. Careers education is good; all Year 11 pupils last year moved on to further education or training.
- Pupils' experiences are enriched by the popular, wide range of extra-curricular activities, from choir to coding, gymnastics to Girl Guides, Warhammer to 'the Word', as well as numerous sports. Visiting speakers, trips and visits, a few overseas, further extend pupils' horizons. Leaders are alert to the fact that several pupils have not left their home area very often. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance at after-school activities is encouraged and monitored closely.
- Along with spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the school promotes British values well. They are blended in to citizenship and religious education lessons and discussed in some assemblies. Several pupils met during the inspection were not familiar with the term British values but had a reasonable understanding of key components such as democracy and tolerance. The opening page of the school's website has links to three pages giving information about democracy and the rule of law, liberty, respect, tolerance and responding to prejudiced behaviour.
- Effective extra subject sessions take place regularly for all years and for groups such as disadvantaged pupils and the most able. Since January 2016, disadvantaged Year 11 pupils have benefited from participating in 'deep learning days' and attending two and a half hours of intensive revision after school.

on Fridays. Pupils wish that this support had started earlier, not just for the pizzas they eat after their hard work!

- With a new senior leader taking responsibility for disadvantaged pupils, the monitoring and support for these pupils has intensified in the last ten months rather than being 'too little, too late' as it was before 2015 GCSEs. The focus now is on reducing the gap in all years, with particular success in Year 7.
- Pupil premium funding has been used wisely this year to support interventions, especially for Year 11 pupils and to strengthen reading, writing and mathematics in all years. Along with catch-up funds, pupil premium funding contributes to, for example, 'Time Table Rockstars' and library books aimed at the transition group and other pupils with low reading ages.
- Reading programmes have been in place for several years but they were not used intensively enough to accelerate progress. Since September 2015, when serious action started, more rapid improvement is evident. Senior leaders appreciate that reading continues to be a top priority as many pupils need to improve their fluency.
- Early in January 2016, supported by many members of staff, the Acting Principal organised a well-attended meeting for parents to share all their concerns, hear how he intended to tackle them and understand his 'Pupils First' mantra. Many parents wrote about the changed atmosphere since January, for example, 'I have noticed an improvement in the life of my children at the school'.
- More parents completed the online questionnaire during this inspection than in 2013 and a higher percentage agreed with all the positive statements. More parents would now recommend the school to others.
- The Acting Principal has taken effective steps to improve communication with parents. He now holds drop-ins for parents, information evenings on how subjects are taught or behaviour expectations, invites them to sit in on lessons and holds discussion and advice evenings for groups such as those with disadvantaged or most-able children.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The Academy Improvement Board set up following the previous inspection was not effective. From day one, the chair of the replacement academy council has quickly assimilated the key issues requiring attention and is keen to unearth 'hidden wrinkles'. He has wisely sought council members with expertise and experience that are highly relevant to the school's position. The enthusiastic members use their skills to oversee areas such as safeguarding or health and safety. The school now has the quality of governance it needs.
 - Council members have information about senior and middle leaders' performance and are strict about pay awards being linked to outcomes. They query what they feel could be overgenerous predictions of future results and keep a sharp eye on how pupil premium and catch-up funds are spent; the chair described disadvantaged pupils' 2015 results as 'woeful'.
 - The chair has negotiated extra funds from the academy sponsor to ensure that enough support staff are in place to tackle underachievement. The school is now successfully seeking external expertise and support for rapid improvement from other academies, associate and independent schools within the Woodard Trust.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are well trained and leaders check that they have assimilated up-to-date procedures and advice on child protection and 'Prevent' strategies. Records are meticulous and checked regularly to ensure pupils are moving towards any personal targets related to well-being. A senior member of staff visits the alternative education provider termly to confirm the quality of provision.
- The developing home-school contact has contributed to improved attendance and far more parents committing to support their children's learning and safety. This, combined with the school's good links with outside agencies to address any safeguarding concerns, creates a culture where pupils' safety is paramount.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Staffing stability has improved this year but teaching requires improvement to ensure consistently good and effective learning – an essential ingredient to overcome the significant underachievement in the past.
- Teachers do not always notice when the most-able pupils are ready to explore a topic in greater depth or do not double-check that pupils, especially those with special education needs, have understood exactly what they are being asked to do. The special educational needs coordinator is working in classrooms to

develop a greater focus on small, clear steps for these pupils so they do not feel overwhelmed and make only limited progress.

- Teachers' feedback to pupils about what to do to improve, on key issues such as the accuracy of their written work, is not consistently effective. Although the school's assessment policy provides clear guidance, some teachers do not follow it routinely.
- The results of all teachers being fully aware of who their disadvantaged pupils are have generated more equal progress in lessons between these pupils and others. Teachers are helping pupils overcome barriers to learning. For example, several teachers either read texts to the class or get pupils to do this, knowing that it is an effective way to be sure weak readers have grasped the content.
- An experienced primary specialist delivers the humanities subjects and supports the emotional and social development of Year 7 pupils in the transition group well. These, and many other pupils, benefit from the expertise of the learning support assistants. Some of them have strong subject knowledge, for example in mathematics or reading strategies, which means they help individuals particularly effectively.
- Teaching is improving and there is some strong teaching in the school. Examples of this which inspectors observed included when: pupils understood the progress they were making, what they had done well and what they needed to do to improve their work; teachers challenged pupils, stretching the more able; teachers applied the school's behaviour for learning policy quickly, making sure there were no interruptions to pupils' learning; teachers asked well-considered questions which made pupils think hard and justify what they said; teachers used stimulating resources that extended pupils' understanding of a topic and enhanced their thinking.
- Experienced teaching assistants work with targeted classes in Year 11 English and mathematics and support before- and after-school classes in mathematics. Teaching for pupils in the Scott Centre is often on a one-to-one or small-group basis, picking up on work in mainstream lessons that these pupils have not attended. Learning support assistants follow the lesson plans carefully and work with pupils sensitively.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. 'Assemblies make you feel like part of a family, a team, a community' or 'Teachers are so cheery, they make your day' reflect typical comments made by pupils.
- Underpinned by assemblies, the chaplain's work and his welcome to all faiths, the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. PSHE and citizenship lessons give pupils insights into politics, relationships, sex education and different family and individual lifestyles, 'We know it's OK to be different; we've learnt that'. Pupils discuss topical issues such as the refugee crisis sensitively.
- Several lessons, in citizenship particularly, reinforce the school's zero tolerance of discrimination. Pupils in Year 8 were seen discussing discrimination against disabled or elderly people with maturity. Pupils are fully aware of the potential problems social media can generate and are well informed about e-safety.
- Leaders take effective steps to monitor the progress of pupils who attend off-site provision. Every term, a member of school staff meets college staff and parents with pupils who attend this provision. Following work-related courses that match their interests and aptitudes, these pupils' behaviour and motivation to achieve improves and they gain worthwhile qualifications along with foundation literacy and numeracy skills. The school ensures their welfare has a high profile. Some of these pupils were likely to be permanently excluded but the school is not prepared to see them missing out on education.
- Whether classified as being disadvantaged, having special educational needs, in the transition group or the Scott Centre, the school ensures that staff liaise well to bring information about individuals together. Looked after children receive strong support to cope with work and their personal lives: 'When I was going through a rough part of my life, the teachers helped me and challenged me'. They attend meetings to discuss how pupil premium funds could be spent to help them, for example having extra tuition in a subject they find difficult.
- Chapter (house) councils send representatives to the academy parliament so that pupils feel they have a voice. They also have many opportunities to take on responsibilities to develop their leadership skills. Pupils are confident that bullying is rare, and several spoke about it, or the use of racist and derogatory language, being dealt with quickly and firmly by staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Acknowledged by senior leaders, some pupils' attitudes to learning, particularly in Year 9, require improvement; they take time to settle and concentrate and do not display a keen work ethic. Girls tend to take more care over the presentation of their work. A minority of pupils are not conscientious about completing work or taking notice of teachers' helpful comments.
- Staff work hard to stress the link between behaviour and progress. The number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions has reduced, the latter halved so far this year. Leaders' focus has now shifted to eradicating low-level disruption, which includes useful steps to get parents involved in encouraging better behaviour.
- Attendance was well below the national average in the last academic year. It has improved, particularly among disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs. Along with better punctuality and a large reduction in the number of persistent absentees, the school's strategies are clearly working. So far this academic year, attendance is just above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Achievement in 2015 GCSEs was extremely low. Pupils made inadequate progress in English, mathematics, science, the humanities and a few other subjects.
- After raising staff's awareness of the most-able pupils, especially those who were also disadvantaged, in several key GCSE subjects, these pupils attained close to the average for similar pupils nationally.
- Since then, pupils' progress has improved because of better teaching, although it remains variable across subjects and year groups. Importantly, more pupils are on track to make expected progress in English by the end of Year 11. Pupils' achievement is rising overall in Years 7 to 10, although the rate of improvement is slower in science and mathematics.
- Year 11 pupils referred to having a 'bad year' in mathematics in Year 10 but feel they are now 'being rescued'. However, the struggle to overcome the numerous staffing changes these pupils have experienced is considerable. Their GCSE results, likely to be marginally better in 2016, will still represent slow progress since Year 7. The same is true for Year 11 pupils' progress in science, although the most able are unlikely to do as well in science as they did in 2015 due to a legacy of weak teaching. Boys do not make as much progress as girls in either of these subjects, especially during Key Stage 4.
- Subjects such as art, media studies, drama and sports particularly, and textiles, information technology, modern foreign languages and sociology, continue to generate very strong progress – seen in 2015 GCSE results and during the inspection. In these subjects, disadvantaged and the most-able pupils make similar progress from their starting points as others. Learners achieve well in the 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is accelerating. Gaps in their achievement are closing across subjects and year groups. However, Year 9 disadvantaged pupils are not doing quite as well as others. The gap between Year 11 disadvantaged pupils' achievement and others in the school and nationally is much smaller this year, improving from a large gap when these pupils were in Year 10. This cohort includes several pupils educated off-site and taking foundation level qualifications and pupils who refuse to attend school; their results impact on overall outcomes figures. Leaders track the progress of the most-able, disadvantaged pupils closely, providing evidence that their progress is accelerating.
- At least one third of Key Stage 3 pupils entered the school with a reading age below their chronological age; a considerable number of pupils' progress is hampered by their inadequate literacy skills. This is changing as the very effective reading programmes spread to all years and include a wider range of pupils. Pupils in Years 7 to 10 are beginning to make better progress in their numeracy skills as teaching settles down in mathematics.
- Pupils with special educational needs, including those with education, health and care plans, make variable progress depending on their learning needs and how well teachers guide their progress in small steps. Those attending the Scott Centre make particularly good progress in learning how to manage their behaviour and knowing when they should leave a lesson and seek support. Most achieve well from their varied starting points.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- A-level pass rates in 2015 matched those seen nationally despite learners starting their courses with overall GCSE grades lower than seen nationally. Results in work-related and academic courses show that

the sixth form adds strong value to these learners' work, particularly in subjects such as English language, media studies and sports. The percentage of A* to B grades improved in 2015 and teachers are determined to carrying on moving it closer to average. With low GCSE results in the past, several learners have to retake GCSE English and/or mathematics – success rates are rising.

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have sharpened how and when they monitor learners' progress to identify slow progress early on and to check learners have chosen the right courses. With higher entry requirements for some subjects, it is rare that learners need to change course. Current progress continues to be strong. Learners are enthusiastic, attentive in lessons and keen to do well; they behave sensibly and thoughtfully.
- The quality of teaching is more consistent and effective in the sixth form than the main school, with only experienced specialists delivering their subjects. Leaders encourage learners to acquire and develop their study skills and confidence to learn independently. This is good practise for both academic and work-related courses as well as for higher education. Teachers use examination board guidance and past papers wisely to prepare learners to sit their examinations confidently.
- Sixth formers receive good careers advice along with preparation for life beyond education and training. Tutor sessions and assemblies, some shared with the main school, help them to consider life's big issues and ponder on aspects of welfare such as mental health.
- Impartial careers advice is strong and linked to the world of work, for example global population increase or refugee movements. The school has strong links with universities, further education colleges, apprenticeship schemes and employers. Learners visit education establishments, attend conferences and careers fairs, undertake work experience (or have to complete a project) linked to their aspirations; their parents attend a useful information evening.
- Over nine out of ten learners proceeding to university in 2015 represented the first generation in their families to do so. All learners continued in education or gained apprenticeships or employment. Retention rates for academic and two-year work-related courses are good.
- Sixth formers do voluntary work within the school and the community. They are now involved in the academy parliament and sometimes organise their own and younger pupils' assemblies. They debate current affairs and have many extra-curricular opportunities. Some overseas travel, to Romania and Sri Lanka for example, stopped in July 2015; learners are keen to see these trips reinstated.
- Learners are very good role models for younger pupils. They feel safe and secure and very well supported with any issues they have both within and outside of school life. The leader of the academy parliament meets academy council members regularly.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form is effective and well organised, as it was at the time of the previous inspection.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 135745 |
| Local authority | West Sussex |
| Inspection number | 10001589 |

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

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| Type of school | Comprehensive |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,490 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 173 |
| Appropriate authority | The Woodard Academies Trust |
| Chair | Mike Hartley |
| Executive Principal | Paul Kennedy |
| Principal (Acting) | Morgan Thomas |
| Telephone number | 01903 711120 |
| Website | www.tla.woodard.co.uk |
| Email address | office@tla.woodard.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 12–13 December 2013 |

Information about this school

- In the last two years there have been numerous staffing changes including the Principal, senior and middle leaders and teachers. The Executive Principal, Acting Principal and senior Vice Principal took up post in January 2016.
- The school is larger than the average sized 11–18 school, with a relatively small sixth form.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is average and rising. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for looked after children.
- A number of Year 7 pupils receive catch-up funding if they did not reach the expected levels in English and/or mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for special educational needs or disability is below average.
- The school manages the Scott Centre which is a special support facility funded by the local authority. It is for up to 12 (seven at present) Years 7–11 pupils or sixth formers pupils of mainstream ability who have education, health and care plans for special educational needs related to the autistic spectrum disorder.
- Close to nine out of ten pupils are of White British heritage with very small numbers of pupils from several minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average; few of them are at the early stages of learning English.
- A small number of pupils attend full-time alternative educational provision at Chichester College or one

day a week at Chichester and Northbrook Colleges.

- In 2015, the school met 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 50 part-lessons. A few lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. In practically all lessons, inspectors looked at pupils' work in books and examined books outside of lessons as well.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and talked to others informally during breaktimes. Discussions were held with staff, including pastoral and academic senior and middle leaders. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Academy Council and seven other council members.
- Inspectors took account of 227 parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and well over 100 parents submitted written comments. Inspectors also considered responses to online questionnaires completed by 154 members of staff. So few pupils were able to access the online questionnaire for them that their responses could not be considered to be representative.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's action plans for 2015/16, standards and progress information, behaviour and attendance records and a range of policies.

Inspection team

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|-------------------------------|------------------|
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