

Onslow St Audrey's School

Old Rectory Drive, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL10 8AB

Inspection dates

21–22 February 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Senior and middle leaders are relatively new to their role. Some lack the experience and skills needed to secure accelerated improvement across the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning is not yet good. The new assessment system is not consistently well used by all teachers.
- Teachers do not routinely use the assessment information they have to plan learning effectively. As a result, pupils, including the most able, do not make sufficiently rapid progress from their different starting points.
- At the end of key stage 4, pupils of all abilities, but especially disadvantaged pupils, did not achieve well enough in 2016. This was particularly so in mathematics, science and humanities.
- Although teachers are applying the school's new marking policy more consistently across subjects, there are variations in the quality of the guidance they offer to help pupils to improve their work.
- Teachers do not always check pupils' learning carefully in lessons before moving on to the next stage.
- New governors have not had the skills to challenge senior leaders rigorously about the school's performance. This has led to an overgenerous view of how well pupils achieve.
- Senior leaders and governors have not focused sharply enough on the administration and oversight of safeguarding arrangements. As a result, some important documentation has gone unchecked for too long.

The school has the following strengths

- The strengthening focus on review and evaluation is building a more accurate picture of the quality of teaching in the school.
- Senior leaders have taken effective action to improve pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absence.
- The school is typically calm and orderly. Pupils feel safe. Most are polite, respectful and behave well.
- The quality of 16 to 19 study programmes is good. Students complete their courses and are supported well to progress to the next stage of their education.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership by:
 - ensuring that all leaders have the skills and confidence to make more consistent and effective contributions to accelerating school improvement, to raise standards across subjects
 - developing improvement targets that are rigorously focused on, and securely rooted in, outcomes for all groups of pupils
 - securing timely and high-quality training for governors, in particular, to improve the accuracy of their understanding of how well pupils are achieving, so that they can hold school leaders to account effectively
 - sharpening the efficiency of senior leaders' and governors' monitoring of the administration of safeguarding arrangements, making sure that checks on updates and required documentation are systematic and regular.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that all staff use the school's new assessment system effectively to plan learning, so that all groups of pupils, including the most able, do as well as they can from their different starting points
 - making sure that teachers undertake systematic checks on pupils' learning in lessons, so that they are confident that pupils are working hard enough, and that key messages are grasped before moving on to the next stage.
- Improve pupils' progress and attainment further in all subjects by ensuring that:
 - outcomes, in particular in mathematics, science and humanities, are at least in line with the national average and that a greater proportion of pupils gain higher grades
 - the rates of progress increase rapidly for all pupils and, in particular, for those who are disadvantaged.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that pupils' outcomes, including the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and the most able, have improved quickly enough.
- Most members of the senior and middle leadership teams are relatively new. Some middle leaders, in particular those in subject leadership roles, have yet to have the training and development needed to secure their confidence in bringing about improvement at the pace required. The quality of subject leadership is too variable to help pupils make rapid progress from their different starting points.
- The school's self-evaluation lacks sufficiently precise targets that are accurately linked to the progress of different groups of pupils in the school. Evaluations of the progress made by disadvantaged pupils, including the impact of pupil premium spending, are not routinely matched against the national expectations for this group. As a result, perceptions of progress over time are open to different interpretations.
- Nevertheless, new appointments have had a positive impact. The recently strengthened focus on review and evaluation is providing a more accurate picture of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school. The leadership team is better equipped to continue to sharpen planning for further improvement.
- Middle leaders say that they feel well supported by senior leaders, for example, through coaching, paired observations and the guidance they receive from the extended leadership team. This culture of coaching and continuous improvement is promoted effectively by those with responsibility for the leadership of teaching, learning and assessment. Their support is valued by teachers, including those who are newly qualified, and is increasingly strong.
- The school's new assessment system is establishing the foundations of more accurate information to help teachers to plan learning that is better matched to the needs of pupils and their different starting points. However, not enough teachers are fully confident in using the information at this early stage.
- Staff are increasingly accountable for pupils' progress in their subjects. Teachers' performance reviews involve an evaluation of the outcomes of the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment. Pay progression is linked appropriately to the targets set as a result of the information the monitoring provides.
- Strategies have been successful in improving pupils' attendance, reducing persistent absence and ensuring typically good behaviour. Pupils know and understand what is expected of them. The school's reputation in the local community has improved in recent years.
- The leadership team has redesigned the curriculum to enable key stage 4 pupils to make better progress. The school works closely with other local schools to offer A-level and work-related programmes. The increasingly popular football academy further enhances sixth-form provision on its own site.

- Leaders model positive values and attitudes. There are many opportunities to extend pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and promote fundamental British values through the curriculum and through the popular, wide-ranging extra-curricular activities available.
- Overall, parents hold typically positive views about the school. As one parent said, 'The school has gone above and beyond to help my child settle in.' Others commented favourably about the quality of education and care provided. However, a minority, in their responses to the Ofsted questionnaire and free-text comments, were less positive. For example, a few felt that communication links between parents and the school could be improved, in particular in relation to the timeliness of responses to concerns raised.

Governance of the school

- Governors have been over-reliant on the information provided by leaders about the performance of the school. Until very recently, they have not had the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding, within the governing body, to interpret accurately the extent of the progress pupils are making. As a result, in the past, the view they held of the school's performance was too generous.
- Although governors receive regular reports on safeguarding matters, there are no systematic checks to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are secure. For example, governors have only recently identified the need for a regular, formal audit of safeguarding requirements to ensure that they are in place and that documents are updated routinely.
- The role of the chair of governors is currently held under temporary arrangements. Both the governing body and senior leaders recognise the need to develop governance further. With this in mind, an external review of governors' work was undertaken recently.
- An experienced governor has now been appointed. She will oversee the implementation of the action plan, arising from the findings of the external review, and ensure the required skills training for the governor team.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Appropriate systems are in place to ensure that statutory requirements are met. However, the administration of safeguarding arrangements lacks rigour. Leaders are aware of the need to strengthen this further, for example through regular auditing of systems at senior level.
- The work of the designated safeguarding team and pastoral leaders ensures that pupils receive appropriate support when needed. In their discussions with inspectors, pupils said that they are confident in raising concerns and know whom to go to if they are worried.
- Staff know how to recognise the signs of abuse and understand their responsibilities, including those related to the 'Prevent' duty, which aims to protect young people from the dangers of radicalisation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high enough across subjects, or across the range of different abilities in the school. As a result, pupils do not routinely make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers' understanding, and the effectiveness of their use of information about how well pupils are doing, are mixed. Therefore, the extent to which pupils learn, from different starting points, and make good progress, is inconsistent.
- The planning in some lessons observed during the inspection demonstrated a mismatch between pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, and the tasks set. Consequently, some activities were too difficult for pupils and others not challenging enough.
- Teachers are inconsistent in applying suitable checks on pupils' learning in lessons before moving on to the next stage. Where this is less effective, explanations and tasks are not adapted quickly enough to ensure that pupils make rapid progress from different starting points. Occasionally, in the lessons inspectors visited, pupils became bored when activities went on for too long.
- Although the revised school marking policy has resulted in a more systematic approach to providing feedback to pupils on their work, inconsistencies remain in the quality of guidance from teachers on how pupils can improve.
- The quality of teaching is stronger for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for lower ability pupils. For these groups, teachers have a secure understanding of pupils' needs and plan learning that is appropriately matched to meet those needs. Inspectors also observed stronger teaching in some subjects, for example, in English, art and food technology and in the sixth form.
- Reading for pleasure is encouraged through the school's literacy strategy and the accelerated reader programme. These initiatives are beginning to show signs of improvement. This is especially so where pupils join the school in Year 7 with reading skills below age-related expectations. However, plans are at an early stage of implementation and not yet embedded fully across subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff balance the need to look after the interests of the majority of pupils while supporting the most vulnerable well. The progress and attendance of the few pupils who are educated off site are monitored to ensure that they remain on track and that their personal development and welfare needs are met.

- British values, for example of tolerance, respect and democracy, are promoted effectively through tutorials, assemblies, charity events, pupils' participation in the school parliament and in personal, social and health education. Sixth-form students provide positive role models and younger pupils act as 'ambassadors' in local primary schools.
- Pupils told inspectors that there is very little bullying in the school and that it is dealt with effectively if it happens. They explained how they are taught about important issues related to safe use of the internet, mobile phones and social media. Most parents agree that their children are safe and cared for appropriately in school.
- The provision for careers information, advice and guidance for pupils is good. Access is made available to suitable activities, for example the recent careers fair attended by a range of professionals, to help inform pupils' choices as they take the next steps in their education.
- Year 7 pupils settle in quickly and are supported well through good working relationships and improved communication links established with local primary schools.
- Although safeguarding is effective and pupils say that they feel safe, aspects of the administration of safeguarding are not as rigorous as they could be. For example, an up-to-date version of the school's safeguarding policy was not available on the school's website prior to the inspection. However, this and other administrative shortfalls were addressed by the end of the inspection.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Typically, pupils are polite, punctual and respectful. Agreed procedures to manage the potential for disruptive behaviour and any deficiencies in expectations of pupils' conduct, are applied effectively by the vast majority of teachers.
- In lessons, most pupils focus their attention on what teachers ask them to do and work hard. The generally good working relationships established between staff and pupils make a positive contribution to day-to-day life in the school.
- Staff supervision ensures that the good standard of behaviour seen in lessons is usually sustained at break- and lunchtimes. However, the behaviour of a very small number of pupils around the school does not reflect the good behaviour seen in lessons.
- Both pupils and staff feel that behaviour has improved as a result of higher expectations.
- Effective systems are in place to make sure that pupils attend school regularly. These systems, coupled with raised expectations, have ensured that overall attendance has improved and the incidence of persistent absence has reduced. The use of the school's isolation room is appropriately managed and helps to ensure that fixed-term and permanent exclusions are rare.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement.

- The progress pupils make remains too variable across subjects because the quality of teaching is inconsistent.
- Although there are signs of improvement, in 2016, too many pupils did not do as well as they should by the end of key stage 4. This was especially so in science and mathematics and in humanities, including for disadvantaged pupils. This was partly, but not exclusively, due to previous decisions made about which courses pupils should follow.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not make the same progress as other, non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. Assessment information provided by the school, and inspectors' own reviews of pupils' work, suggest that differences are diminishing, but not quickly enough to sustain rapid improvement over time.
- Despite recent improvements, the most able pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils do not yet make the progress needed to ensure that they achieve their full potential by the end of each key stage.
- Lower ability pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress broadly in line with the national average. Support for these pupils, and the strategies implemented to improve their learning and progress, are generally effective in helping them to catch up.
- For the few pupils who attend alternative provision off site, school records shared with inspectors indicate that they are making appropriate progress on their courses.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth-form leader and teachers work hard to promote high aspirations of what students can achieve, across subjects. Typically, effective teaching, monitoring and targeted support help to keep students on track so that they complete their courses.
- While variations remain between subjects and across academic and work-related provision, outcomes overall in the sixth form show an improving trend. In 2016, more students achieved higher grades in GCE A-level examinations than previously.
- The school meets the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes.
- In order to improve their employability and progression opportunities, all students are expected to complete a period of work experience. Those students without GCSEs in English or mathematics are required to re-sit examinations to achieve an A*–C grade, or the equivalent.
- Sixth-form students are typically confident and professional in the way that they conduct themselves in school. They say that they are well supported by their teachers and understand what they need to do to achieve higher grades.
- The effective careers information, advice and guidance available help them to prepare for their next steps in education and/or training. Teachers endeavour to keep in touch and provide ongoing support for the few students who have not gained a place in education, training or employment when they leave school.
- Many students go on to study at university and, increasingly, more of them are considering taking up apprenticeships.

- The football academy, introduced into the school in 2014, provides an attractive route and individual programmes of study for students who might not have otherwise chosen to stay on in education at the end of Year 11. This offer has recently been made available to girls as well as boys. The number of students joining the sixth form at the end of key stage 4 is growing year on year.

School details

Unique reference number	137792
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10023448

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	746
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ray Little (acting)
Headteacher	Michael Harpham
Telephone number	01707 264228
Website	http://onslow.herts.sch.uk/
Email address	head@onslow.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 July 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Although the number of pupils on the school roll is increasing, the school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school opened as a converter academy in January 2012.

- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding has increased since the last inspection and is now above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.
- The school is part of the Welwyn and Hatfield 16–19 Consortium. As a result, some students study courses in other schools.
- A small number of pupils attend off-site provision at the Park Pupil Referral Unit.
- The school has specially resourced provision for up to 12 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities related to speech and language.
- The school meets the government's minimum floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors scrutinised pupils’ work, in and out of lessons, and observed learning in 36 lessons, or parts of lessons. Some lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors also heard pupils read, observed assembly and tutorial time and visited the library and extra-curricular activities held at lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, groups of teachers and newly qualified teachers, and four governors, including the acting chair of governors who joined the meeting by phone.
- Formal and informal discussions took place between inspectors and pupils from all year groups. Inspectors also observed pupils’ behaviour as they arrived at school and during lunch- and breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation provided by the school, including the school’s self-evaluation and development plan, assessment information for all year groups and related to pupil premium spending and Year 7 catch-up funding, records of behaviour and attendance and those relating to pupils’ safety and welfare.
- Alongside the school’s own surveys of pupils’ and parents’ views, inspectors considered the 92 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, and 30 free texts sent by parents, 81 responses to Ofsted’s questionnaire for pupils and 67 responses to the questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Simon Webb	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector
Vivien Corrie-Wing	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Maher	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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