

Sir Frederic Osborn School

Herns Lane, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 2AF

Inspection dates

12–13 September 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	Requires improvement
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 is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils do not make consistently strong progress across all subjects and year groups.
- Boys who join the school with average attainment do not make the progress they should.
- Additional funding has not been targeted effectively enough to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Not all subject leaders are driving forward improvements in their own departments rapidly enough.
- Teachers set work which does not challenge middle-attaining pupils sufficiently.
- Teachers do not routinely convert their detailed knowledge about the individual needs of pupils into practical classroom strategies which accelerate progress.
- Overall attendance is too low.
- There is too much low-level disruption in a minority of classes.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and his senior team have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and this has informed clear, coherent development planning focused on sustained improvement.
- Teaching is now improving because underperformance is being addressed and professional development enhanced.
- Pupils benefit from the extremely high-quality guidance, support and care provided by the school, and this supports their very positive personal development.
- Provision for sixth-form students is strong and they make good progress as a result.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes so that achievement is at least in line with national averages in all subjects and for all pupil groups by:
 - accelerating the progress made by middle prior-attaining boys
 - improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils throughout the school.
- Improve teaching in the school to good or better by:
 - ensuring that all teachers convert their thorough understanding of individual pupils' needs into practical classroom strategies which effectively accelerate progress
 - increasing the amount of challenge regularly experienced by middle-attaining pupils in lessons.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - ensuring that overall attendance improves to be in line with, or better than, the national average
 - eliminating the remaining low-level disruption in classes.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - strengthening the impact of the additional funding the school receives, including the pupil premium, funding for pupils who have special needs and/or disabilities and Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding
 - enhancing the quality and consistency of subject leadership.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Over time, governors and leaders have not reacted with sufficient urgency to address academic standards which are below average. While there was some improvement in attainment at key stage 4 in 2017, the overall progress made by pupils in the school, and that made by disadvantaged pupils, remains too low.
- A new headteacher was appointed in 2016. He and his reorganised senior team have undertaken a thorough and perceptive analysis of what needs to be focused upon to raise standards. This understanding has underpinned coherent development planning which is appropriately focused on securing improved outcomes for pupils. This vision for the future of the school is supported by a very large majority of staff, parents and pupils. However, the full impact of these plans is yet to be seen across all areas of the school.
- School leaders acknowledge that additional funding, including the pupil premium, funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding, has not been targeted as sharply as it should in supporting these pupils across the school.
- Several new leaders have recently been appointed to oversee these areas. They are in the process of developing their skills in their leadership roles. They have not yet had sufficient time to be able to evaluate the relative effectiveness of the developments they have instigated.
- The extent to which teachers in charge of subject departments drive forward improvements effectively in their areas of responsibility is inconsistent. This has resulted in a large variation in achievement between subject departments.
- Teaching is now improving because the professional development programme has been sharpened to enhance teachers' professional skills. Performance management systems are used effectively to challenge staff and hold them to account for pupils' progress. Underperformance is being tackled directly and weaker teaching eliminated.
- School leaders have recently undertaken a review of the curriculum and reshaped it to ensure that pupils have sufficient time in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. They have done so while promoting a broad and balanced curriculum which allows all pupils to experience a wide range of subjects.
- Leadership of the sixth form is very effective. Leaders have ensured that the school's own systems support students to learn successfully within the consortium arrangement through which they study. As a result, they make strong progress.
- School leaders ensure that all pupils receive high levels of care, guidance and support. They have introduced highly effective strategies for encouraging pupils' positive attitudes to their learning and to raise pupils' own aspirations about what they can achieve.
- Opportunities for developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural knowledge and understanding are expertly threaded throughout the curriculum. These include assemblies, tutorial periods and the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities

pursued by pupils, especially in sports and the arts. Pupils gain a good preparation for life in modern Britain, and the school is a highly tolerant and inclusive community as a result.

- The successful transition of pupils to the next stage of their education or employment is well supported by effective impartial advice and guidance throughout the school.
- Plans for the school to become an academy sponsored by a local multi-academy trust later this academic year are well advanced. School leaders are already working closely with leaders from this trust and this collaboration is effectively supporting improvements in teaching, learning, behaviour and leadership.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has been successfully strengthened over the last two years. The new chair of the governing body is a national leader of governance and four other governors have experience in governance in an outstanding local school. They have brought necessary expertise to the governing body. As a result, governors are now effectively providing a clear strategic direction for the development of the school, which is underpinning current improvements.
- Governors now have a much clearer understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching in the school. They ensure that the school performance management process rewards good teaching and challenges underperformance. Governors have significantly sharpened their focus on holding leaders to account for the use of the additional funding available to the school.
- Governors understand and undertake their range of responsibilities diligently. They fulfil all their duties, such as ensuring that safeguarding procedures, including those concerned with dealing with the threat of radicalisation, are rigorous and thorough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school ensures a thorough approach to safer recruitment, maintaining central records and risk assessments. All staff are aware of their role in ensuring pupils' safety and welfare. They have had up-to-date safeguarding training. Child protection policies are clear and understood by staff.
- Pupils are taught effectively how to keep themselves safe and deal with risk. Procedures to identify and respond to any concerns are rigorous. Communication with parents and carers in these cases is clear, and working relationships with other agencies to keep children safe are effective. The school successfully coordinates the care and welfare of children looked after who attend the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching in the school has not been of a sufficiently high standard over time to ensure that all pupils make the progress they should.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what middle prior-attaining

pupils, particularly boys, can achieve in lessons and, as a result, these pupils do not receive enough work that challenges them. This limits the progress they make.

- Teachers do not routinely convert their detailed knowledge about the individual needs of the pupils in their classes, for example disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, into practical strategies for accelerating their progress in the classroom.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is improving. Pupils routinely experience highly effective teaching in a number of subjects. Teaching in English is increasingly strong, and the progress pupils make is accelerating as a result. In modern foreign languages and drama, teachers have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve within lessons and this promotes rapid learning.
- Teaching in mathematics is also improving. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to plan lessons which build coherently upon pupils' existing mathematical skills. However, pupils' numeracy skills are not sufficiently developed in other subjects across the curriculum.
- The school has recently introduced a new assessment system. This is becoming rapidly embedded in classroom practice and, as a result, the school is tracking the progress pupils make with increasing precision.
- In most lessons, pupils take great pride and care in producing work because teachers convey clear expectations of how they want work to be presented and organised. As a result, many pupils are constructing coherent written records of their learning, which will support future revision.
- When teachers are working with the most able pupils, including students in the sixth form, they regularly use their secure subject expertise to promote mature and sophisticated discussion, which effectively encourages mature critical reflection upon the topic being studied. This helps the most able pupils to remain motivated and make secure progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- School leaders have adopted a range of successful strategies to encourage increasingly positive pupil attitudes towards learning. They have worked successfully to heighten pupils' own aspirations about what they can achieve and to strengthen their resilience when facing challenges. This focus underpins the school's rewards system, the personal development curriculum and a comprehensive programme of pupil leadership roles.
- The school develops the physical and emotional well-being of pupils through a range of subjects across the curriculum, including drama, dance, physical education and religious education. A large number of pupils benefit from the range of extra-curricular activities available, including sport, music and the arts. Sport is a particularly important element of life at the school, and many opportunities are enthusiastically taken up by pupils in both competitive and recreational sport.

- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education or employment through effective impartial advice and guidance.
- Pupils feel safe and are well looked after in the school. They are confident that staff will help and support them should they experience any problems, for example bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, for example when using technology and the internet. Pupils believe that there is always an adult at the school who will listen to them and give them advice. They believe that the school lives up to its espoused aspiration to be 'a small school with a big heart'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- A minority of teachers do not apply the school's behaviour and sanctions policy consistently enough. As a result, learning is sometimes impeded by low-level disruption from a minority of pupils. Over time, this has a negative impact on the progress pupils make.
- Last year, overall attendance remained below the national average. The school has, however, worked successfully to reduce persistent absence rates and these are now broadly in line with those that are found on average nationally.
- Pupils move around the school in a measured, calm and orderly fashion. Pupils look after the large school site well and are usually polite and courteous to adults and each other. They are normally punctual to lessons.
- Detailed records show that the number of behaviour-related sanctions is reducing due to the effective use of a range of strategies, including the use of the 'reflective learning centre', where pupils work constructively away from mainstream lessons. The number of fixed-term exclusions at the school is also declining. The school has dealt effectively with the small number of bullying incidents that have occurred. Pupils say that they have confidence in the systems that are in place to deter, and respond to, bullying.
- The school effectively monitors the behaviour and well-being of pupils who are taught in off-site provision. The impact of educating some pupils in this way is positive in terms of improving their attitudes and attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016 at key stage 4, pupils made progress overall which was well below the national average. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils was significantly below that of other pupils nationally. The progress made by boys who joined the school with average attainment was significantly below that of similar pupils nationally.
- In 2016, the progress made by pupils in English and mathematics was well below that made in these subjects on average by similar pupils nationally. The school has consequently adopted a considerable number of strategies to improve outcomes in these important subject areas. As a result, attainment in these subjects improved in 2017. The standards attained in other subject areas across the curriculum in 2017, however, were not consistently strong.

- The school's current performance information indicates that standards of attainment and progress are generally improving across the school. Evidence from this inspection supports this picture of improving outcomes. However, overall achievement is still hampered by the slow progress made by disadvantaged pupils and boys who join the school with average attainment, along with inconsistent progress between different subject departments.
- Pupils who join the school in Year 7 needing to catch up in literacy and numeracy do not make as much progress as they should in these areas in their first year. The school's own analysis and evidence from this inspection, including inspectors listening to low prior-attaining pupils read, demonstrate that additional funding received for this purpose has not been used as effectively as it should. The school is currently reviewing and revising the range of interventions it provides for these pupils.
- From their different starting points, pupils with below-average or above-average attainment on entry make better progress than those who join the school with average attainment. In 2016, the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, made progress which was broadly in line with the national average. When inspectors listened to some of the most able key stage 3 pupils read, they did this with a pleasing amount of fluency and confidence.
- Attainment in the sixth form improved considerably in 2017.
- The school closely monitors the progress of pupils who are educated away from the school site through programmes of alternative provision. The school ensures that they attend regularly and are following appropriate courses. Consequently, these pupils make better progress than they did before they started these placements.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The leadership of the sixth form is effective. Leaders have a clear vision for the development of the sixth form, which they communicate clearly. Leaders responded quickly and decisively to disappointing academic outcomes in 2016 and, consequently, the attainment of students rose markedly in 2017. Those students who follow vocational courses achieve well.
- The progress of students currently in the sixth form is accelerating and they are making good progress in a wide range of subject areas. Disadvantaged students make equally strong progress.
- A minority of students join the sixth form without high enough GCSE attainment in English or mathematics. The school works diligently to ensure that almost all of these pupils improve their grade before they finish their courses.
- Sixth-form leaders ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment provided by the school's own teachers is good. They also collaborate effectively with partner schools to monitor the effectiveness of provision across the consortium and support students well so that overall progress is strong.
- The work of the sixth form to promote the personal development and welfare of students is highly effective. Sixth-form students make a very positive contribution to the ethos of the wider school. Students have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Students value the high expectations and the quality of care,

support and guidance they receive which effectively build and consolidate their confidence. One student told inspectors: 'Because the school believes in us, we believe in ourselves.'

- The behaviour of students in the sixth form is excellent. Students take pride in their school and in their work and are committed to doing well. They conduct themselves in a mature and responsible way. High expectations for attendance and punctuality have resulted in improved attendance.
- Sixth-form leaders are increasingly successful in guiding students onto appropriate courses. Careers advice and guidance for students once they are in the sixth form are highly effective. This enables students to make informed decisions about the next steps in their education. As a result, students move on to appropriate higher education courses.
- The school successfully meets the requirements for the provision of 16 to 19 study programmes. Leaders effectively monitor all elements of the study programmes, including non-qualification activities. Students following both academic and vocational courses follow a programme to enhance their understanding of the world of work, and many post-16 students undertake work experience of some kind.

School details

Unique reference number	117525
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10031399

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
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	611
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lin Keen
Headteacher	Jed Whelan
Telephone number	01707 351 350
Website	www.sfosborn.herts.sch.uk/
Email address	head@sfosborn.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic groups is below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is above average.

- The school's sixth form is part of the Welwyn and Hatfield Consortium.
- Some pupils are taught away from the school site at The Park Education Support Centre, Potters Bar and at Oaklands College, St Albans.
- The school became a foundation school in 2016. It plans to become an academy and join a local multi-academy trust in 2018. The school already receives support from a national leader in education from Sandringham School, which is the lead school within this trust.
- The school met the government floor standards in 2016.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 42 lessons in order to contribute to their evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Some of these observations were conducted jointly with members of the school's leadership team. Inspectors observed tutorial periods and assemblies and listened to small groups of pupils reading.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, teachers, governors, a representative of the prospective sponsoring trust, a representative of the local authority and various groups of pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including policies, the minutes of governors' meetings, the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan and information about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in 70 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 66 free-text responses, and 35 questionnaires returned by pupils. They also considered one additional written communication from a parent.
- An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from an alternative provider used by the school to educate some of its pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Lawrence, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Bruce Clark	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Crow	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	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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