

The Sir Robert Woodard Academy

Upper Boundstone Lane, Sompting, West Sussex BN15 9QZ

Inspection dates

30–31 January 2018

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- In 2016 and 2017, disadvantaged pupils' progress by the end of key stage 4 was poor. Similarly, progress in A-level courses in the sixth form was poor. Recent improvements are not rapid or substantial enough.
- Middle leaders and local governors have an overgenerous view of the quality of education in the school. They do not focus sufficiently on the progress pupils make in their learning. Progress overall, and particularly in mathematics, requires improvement.
- Too many teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. As a result, pupils of different abilities are not making as much progress as they could.
- Teaching does not constantly promote high standards in the way that pupils present or set out their work. Pupils are not routinely challenged to apply their writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Teachers do not consistently apply the school's policy of providing feedback to help pupils improve their work.
- Assessment and tracking systems are new. Too few teachers are using performance information to design appropriate learning activities that meet the needs of their pupils. Consequently, in some areas those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities struggle to keep up.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders' actions have secured a marked increase in attendance this year, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and the school promotes their personal development well.
- Leaders have implemented improved tracking and monitoring systems and ensured that students receive better advice and guidance in the sixth form.
- Aspects of teaching and assessment are improving because of strong teamwork and the commitment of staff to training and senior leaders' recent initiatives.
- Senior leaders have redesigned the curriculum and assessment systems and have begun the process of broadening provision in key stage 4.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the outcomes all groups of pupils by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - have the highest expectations of all pupils
 - focus on the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils, so that they catch up with other pupils nationally
 - follow the school's expectations for assessment and feedback, so that all pupils, particularly those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are supported effectively in lessons
 - set challenging tasks that engage and interest all pupils, particularly the most able.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership by:
 - increasing local governors' and middle leaders' understanding of the achievement of groups of pupils within the school compared to national benchmarks
 - ensuring that subject leaders monitor the work of their teams closely and tackle weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment promptly and effectively
 - continuing to review and enhance the curriculum for pupils who have low prior attainment so that they make at least good progress
 - maintaining recent improvements to the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, ensuring that these groups' attendance is at least in line with the national average for all pupils
 - maintaining the recent improvements in assessment and monitoring systems in the sixth form so that students who need help are identified early and supported to improve.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school has faced some challenging times. Changes in leadership, financial considerations and an insufficient focus on teaching and learning have meant that leaders and governors have not maintained sufficiently high standards at GCSE and A level since the previous inspection.
- Following his appointment in September 2017, the principal has wasted no time in initiating a restructure of leadership at all levels. A new senior leadership team has been formed, with each member having clear lines of responsibility linked to the academy improvement plan. Since the beginning of this academic year, the team has introduced a number of well-judged initiatives to improve key aspects of the school's work. These changes have significantly improved some areas, such as attendance, this year. However, in other areas it is too soon to see an impact.
- The principal has a clear vision and programme to build the capacity of leadership at all levels. Middle leadership is currently under review while senior leaders' new curriculum provision and assessment systems become embedded. Subject leaders are an enthusiastic and committed team. However, they have varying levels of experience and some do not have a sufficiently sharp focus on the progress that disadvantaged pupils make in their subjects. Subject leaders have not been able to ensure that all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Leaders' and local governors' assessment of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school is too generous. Leaders recognise that outcomes need to improve but still consider the quality of teaching to be good. Their evaluation of standards of teaching in the school does not pay sufficient attention to the impact of teaching on the progress made by key groups of pupils such as the disadvantaged.
- Senior leaders and subject leaders have not secured consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum. There are some examples of more effective teaching in most subject areas and pockets of strength in English and physical education. However, leaders agree that this is not consistently the case in other subjects, particularly mathematics.
- Teachers and pastoral staff report that they feel leaders value them as individuals and support them with appropriate training. Consequently, staff morale is high.
- Senior leaders have developed a shared culture of aspiration and professional development across the school. Leaders use their improved monitoring systems to review the quality of teaching regularly. This has supported them with an improved understanding of teachers' strengths and areas for development. New opportunities have been developed to use this information to develop training that is focused on individual and whole-school priorities. While this approach has brought about some improvements to teaching, it is too soon to see a significant impact on pupils' outcomes.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) ensures that additional funding is spent effectively and engages well with external agencies to provide suitable support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The SENCo has shared detailed strategies

to support pupils who have SEN with teachers. However, many teachers are not making effective enough use of this information to design appropriate learning activities to meet individual pupils' needs.

- Governors and leaders do not ensure that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent effectively. Strategies have not been successful. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils underperformed in all key measures at GCSE. Although leaders have been successful in improving the attendance of this group since September, variations in the quality of teaching mean that the achievement of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is not yet good in all year groups.
- Senior leaders have started to broaden the curriculum by ensuring that more pupils are able to take a modern foreign language at GCSE. The principal is quite clear that further improvements and a wider range of key stage 4 courses is needed to ensure that a balanced curriculum that is accessible to all pupils regardless of their prior attainment. Pupils now receive improved advice and guidance. Better provision for a wider range of courses is planned for the current Year 8 cohort due to take their GCSE options later this year.
- Tutor time and assemblies are used well to promote interest in a wide range of issues, stimulated by current affairs. These, together with the religious education programme and a range of opportunities in other subjects, combine to promote an awareness of spiritual, moral and social issues. Pupils value equalities and are respectful of people from different backgrounds and beliefs. However, older pupils are not sufficiently confident or knowledgeable to discuss different faiths and cultures. More needs to be done to prepare pupils better for life in culturally diverse modern Britain.
- The formal curriculum is supported by a wide variety of extra-curricular clubs and activities. These sporting, artistic and musical activities enable pupils to develop their interests and grow in self-confidence. Pupils are rightly proud of the school's success in the performing arts and basketball. They value the opportunity to take part in competitions, charity fundraising and the challenge of participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. This broad and rich extra-curricular programme plays an important role in the school's work to promote personal development.

Governance of the school

- Local governors serving on the academy council are committed and dedicated to the school, many having served for a number of years. They take their roles seriously because they know that their work is important and makes a difference to pupils' future opportunities and the local community.
- Local governors bring a range of useful skills and expertise to their roles. They have worked hard to support improvements in leadership. A planned calendar of meetings and visits enables local governors to evaluate aspects of the school such as safeguarding, attendance and the school's provision for vulnerable pupils well.
- Governors and trustees have an overoptimistic view of the quality of teaching and the school's outcomes. Over time they have not sufficiently challenged leaders to ensure that all groups of pupils make strong progress from their starting points by the end of Year 11, or that students make good progress in their A-level courses. This is because they have not been sufficiently well informed by leaders' self-evaluations, nor have

they made effective enough use of different sources of evidence to challenge leaders' actions.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that all required checks are made and that adults are appropriately qualified. The diligent recording of these checks meets statutory requirements.
- Leaders ensure that staff engage in regular training and receive timely briefings so that their understanding of child protection is up to date. Consequently, teaching and pastoral staff understand their roles and are knowledgeable about safeguarding issues.
- Staff and pupils understand how to identify those at risk and how to report any concerns. Leaders swiftly and appropriately follow up any concerns raised, including involving outside agencies when necessary.
- The vertical tutoring system, together with assemblies and registration times, help to develop good relationships and foster a nurturing ethos. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that they all felt confident to share any concerns that they may have with school staff and that they trusted them to take appropriate actions. Parental feedback from Parent View confirmed that pupils feel safe and happy in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The impact of teaching and assessment on pupils' learning and the progress that they make is inconsistent within subjects, particularly mathematics, and across the school.
- Teachers' access to assessment information is improving. However, frequently teachers do not use it well enough to design learning activities that meet the needs of all learners. Too often, all pupils receive the same tasks to complete. Consequently, the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged and those with lower prior attainment are not supported effectively to fully engage with the tasks set or complete their work. Where this occurs, pupils do not progress as well as they could.
- Teachers' use of questioning to challenge deeper thinking is inconsistent. Nevertheless, there are examples of stronger teaching in all subjects. Some teaching in science, English and the arts typically involves very effective questioning of pupils. For example, strong relationships and careful planning underpinned the teacher's skilful interactions with pupils in a Year 7 science lesson. The teacher capably targeted her questions to motivate and engage disadvantaged pupils, and others who have low prior attainment. As a result, all pupils persevered to produce their own detailed descriptions of the processes of digestion and were happy to celebrate the successes of their peers.
- Most teachers deploy the strategies required by the school's feedback policy. However, the quantity and quality of their feedback to pupils is variable. Some strong examples were seen in English lessons. Here teachers' verbal and written subject-specific feedback challenged pupils to reflect upon, refine and improve their work. Too often in

subjects such as science, mathematics and religious education teachers' feedback is irregular and/or insufficiently detailed.

- Across key stages 3 and 4 teachers' expectations of pupil's presentation of their work is too low. Too frequently work in pupils' books is scruffy or incomplete. Where this is the case, pupils' books and folders do not provide them with a useful resource to consolidate their learning. This is not the case in the sixth form, where teachers' expectations are much higher.
- Across different subjects pupils are not developing and applying their literacy and numeracy skills. In some subjects pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to present their thinking in a coherent, structured and articulate written format. In too many lessons, graphs and charts are unclear and diagrams inaccurate and/or mislabelled. As a result, the depth of pupils' understanding and their rates of progress in these subjects are limited.
- Teaching assistants are trained appropriately and well informed about the needs of the pupils they support. They offer effective support to pupils who have SEN in class.
- Pupils benefit from the positive relationships they have with staff and they come to lessons prepared to learn. Classrooms tend to be calm, orderly and safe spaces where pupils are happy to offer answers and voice their opinions in front of their peers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Positive relationships, the ethos of 'aspire to achieve' and an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect are strengths of the school. Pupils told inspectors that they feel happy and well supported by the staff.
- Most pupils' responses to Ofsted's student questionnaire were very positive. They recognise how well the school promotes equalities, encourages them to take on responsibilities and develops their independent learning skills.
- Pupils are safe and secure in the school. Effective systems are in place to offer help and support to vulnerable pupils, sometimes involving external agencies when appropriate. The large majority of parents responding to Parent View affirmed that their child is well looked after at school and that their child is safe and happy here. Parents' faith in The Sir Robert Woodard Academy is well placed; it offers a very nurturing and inclusive community.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Through tutor time, assemblies and in some subjects, teachers ensure that pupils are aware of the risks and potential dangers in wider society.
- The small number of pupils educated offsite benefit from their experience of a broader and more vocational curriculum, and from bespoke support packages. Staff work closely with alternative providers to enable these pupils to succeed, check that they are safe and monitor their welfare.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school. Pupils are courteous and helpful, and they welcome visitors and are happy to explain their work. They are smart and wear their uniform with pride. There is very little litter or graffiti around the school.
- In most lessons, pupils are focused on their work and low-level disruption is rare. Occasionally, in a minority of lessons when tasks are not well planned or are insufficiently stretching, some pupils can disrupt learning through off-task behaviour.
- Pupils reported that bullying is rare and, when it does occur, they trust staff to swiftly respond and take appropriate actions. Older pupils spoke with confidence that homophobia or racism are not acceptable in school.
- Historically, fixed-term exclusions have been low. In the last term there has been an increased number due to the higher expectations of the new senior leadership team. The school has invested well in resources and systems to encourage good behaviour and support pupils. As a result, behaviour and attitudes have improved.
- In the past, overall attendance was below national figures, with disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities having particularly poor attendance rates. This is no longer the case. Through improved monitoring and liaison with families, new leaders have been highly effective in improving attendance this year.
- Overall attendance has improved and is in line with national average. Similarly, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has improved significantly, although gaps do remain. Leaders and governors are very aware of these differences and have prioritised resources to continue to address them.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016 pupils progress overall and in a range of subjects was below the national average. Overall progress decreased in 2017 with English, mathematics and other subjects being well below the average. The progress of disadvantaged pupils in this cohort was particularly weak.
- The school's own progress information and work in pupils' books indicate that not enough pupils in the current Year 11 have made good progress. There are signs that progress is improving in other year groups but there is still variation within subjects and between groups in both key stages 3 and 4.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities has been below average over time in a number of subjects. The systems for assessing and checking pupils' progress are appropriate. When used effectively, these systems support improving rates of progress by helping teachers to identify and meet the needs of these pupils. However, these changes are very recent and their impact is still variable.
- Current pupils in different year groups, including the most able, are now making better progress across the curriculum. This is because teaching and assessment are beginning to improve. Nevertheless, leaders acknowledge that inconsistency in teaching means

that the most able are not always challenged with sufficiently demanding activities and the deeper thinking required.

- Inconsistency in teaching is resulting in different groups of pupils making varying rates of progress. In books, pupils' work shows differing attitudes towards their learning and in many subjects the quality of their written work is not good enough.
- Shortcomings in pupils' outcomes in mathematics, and to a lesser extent English, mean that they are not as well prepared for their next stages of education, employment or training as they should be. In 2017 only one third of disadvantaged pupils achieved at least a standard pass (grade 4) in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- The school works closely with local employers and colleges so that pupils receive independent careers advice and guidance to support them with their next steps. As a result, the proportion of pupils who go on to further education, employment or training is high.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- In recent years the progress made by students in a range of A levels has been well below the national average. In 2017, A-level outcomes did not meet national minimum standards. Over time, the small cohorts of students that have taken applied general courses have made better progress.
- Strong new leadership this year has introduced much-improved monitoring and tracking and a drive to improve teaching and learning. Although in its early stages, leaders have already been able to ensure that early intervention has enabled targeted support to those students who fall behind in their studies. As a result, current cohorts are making progress in most of their A levels broadly in line with expectations from their starting points.
- Teaching is more effective in the sixth form than elsewhere in the school. Strong relationships and high expectations characterise most lessons. Subjects which have significantly underperformed in the past are improving. For example, in a Year 13 English literature lesson, the teacher's strong subject knowledge and probing questioning skills facilitated challenging reflection and debate. In Year 12 biology, the students' well-organised folders of work provide them with a valuable resource for revision.
- The small numbers of students who retake GCSE English or mathematics make progress and improve their grades.
- Students report that they feel safe and that they are well looked after because there is appropriate support in place to meet their needs. Leaders acknowledge that more needs to be done to improve the tracking and monitoring of students' uptake of enrichment activities and to improve the quality of work experience on offer.
- Students now receive better information and guidance about universities, employability and their next steps after they leave school. Students taking A levels have progressively higher aspirations. The small sixth form is becoming increasingly well represented in the number of applications to Russell Group universities. Two students have recently received offers to study at Oxford University, a first for the school.

School details

Unique reference number	135744
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10040943

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	984
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	101
Appropriate authority	The academy council
Chair	Cllr David Simmons
Principal	Kieran Scanlon
Telephone number	01903 767434
Website	www.srwa.woodard.co.uk
Email address	kscanlon@srwa.woodard.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 December 2015

Information about this school

- The Sir Robert Woodard Academy is an average-sized secondary school with a small sixth form.
- The principal took up the substantive post in September 2017. Previously he had been vice-principal at the school. Since the previous inspection there has been a restructuring of the senior leadership team, with several new appointments.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The number of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is in line with the national average.

- The number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who receive support is well above the national average. Similarly, the number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school currently meets the government's floor standards for achievement at key stage 4.
- A small number of key stage 4 pupils attend alternative provision at Chichester College.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made visits to a total of 31 lessons in order to contribute to their evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment. Most of these observations were conducted jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also visited an assembly, tutor times and observed pupils' conduct around the site at break and lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with the principal, members of the academy council, academic and pastoral leaders, teachers and support staff, and representatives of the Woodard Academies Trust.
- Pupils' views were gathered from meetings with groups of pupils and sixth formers. Informal conversation with pupils and students took place around the school site.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation. This included leaders' self-evaluation and improvement planning documents, information about pupils' progress and standards, the school's website, minutes of the academy council meetings, records of behaviour and attendance information, and a wide range of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in 144 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, surveys returned by 146 pupils, 65 questionnaires returned by staff and the contents of two emails received from parents.

Inspection team

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