

Sir Frederic Osborn School

Herns Lane, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 2AF

Inspection dates 30 June–1 July 2015

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Sixth form provision | | Requires improvement | 3 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The proportion of the most-able students who attain the highest grades in examinations lags behind that found nationally.
- Teachers do not always set work that is best suited to the needs of most-able students or that challenges them sufficiently.
- The attainment and progress made by boys is not as good as that of girls. The gap between the two groups is wider than found in most other schools.
- Attainment and progress in science are not as good as those in English and mathematics.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Attainment is below that found nationally and too few students attain at the higher grades.
- The speaking and listening skills of the least-able students are not as good as they need to be. This poses a barrier to their progress. Teachers do not focus sufficiently on promoting these skills.
- Some students do not take enough care to present their handwriting neatly.
- A few teachers do not apply the school's procedures for marking students' work and do not check to see if students have responded to the guidance that marking contains.
- Subject leaders in some departments do not provide guidance and support for their colleagues to make the best possible use of the available assessment data as a basis for planning the next stages of students' learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governors are bringing about rapid improvements in students progress and in the quality of teaching.
- Standards as measured by the proportion of students gaining 5 A*-C GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, are on course to be broadly average when compared with last years' national figure.
- Student's progress, including that of disadvantaged students, is on course to compare favourably with that expected nationally.
- Students behave well and work hard in lessons. Students of all ages are eager to take responsibility and leadership roles. The behaviour of sixth form students is exemplary. The school works effectively to keep students safe.
- Teaching, including that for the sixth form is improving. Lessons invariably capture students' enthusiasm and interest.
- Provision for student's personal development and for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school prepares students well for life in modern Britain.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students' learning during lessons and looked at the quality of work in their books. Almost all of the observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher or with other members of the leadership team.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior, subject and other leaders, groups of students, members of the governing body and representatives from Hertfordshire Local Authority and Sandringham Academy.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in the 46 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View and in 62 questionnaires submitted by staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's data about students' attainment and progress as well as data on their behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors also considered documents evaluating the school's performance, its plans for improvement, notes about the work of the governing body and policies concerning the safeguarding of students.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Godfrey Bancroft, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Ben Ramdhony | Additional Inspector |
| Judith Wakeling | Additional Inspector |
| Susan Cox | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students who come from minority ethnic groups is below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding to support students who are in the care of the local authority or who are known to be eligible for free school meals) is above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school's sixth form is part of the Welwyn Hatfield Consortium.
- The school receives support from local and national leaders in education, including some from the Sandringham School.
- A small number of students are taught offsite at The Park Pupil Referral Unit and at Oaklands College.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Focus more closely on ensuring that the most-able students, including those in the sixth form, make enough progress to attain the highest examination grades of which they are capable.
- Strengthen boys' achievement so that the gap between their attainment and progress and that of girls continues to close.
- Improve standards and progress in science so that they match those of English and mathematics.
- Pay greater attention to improving the speaking and listening skills of the least-able students.
- Provide support for those students who need to improve their handwriting.
- Undertake checks and training to make sure that all teachers make the best possible use of the school's procedures for marking students work and for students to respond to the guidance that marking contains.
- Ensure that subject leaders in all departments provide guidance and support for their colleagues to make the best possible use of the available assessment data when planning the next stages of students' learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and school leaders are working effectively and are bringing about rapid improvements in students' attainment and progress and in their behaviour and attitudes to learning. School leaders are committed to ensuring that every student is able to do as well as they can. Discrimination of any form is not tolerated. The school has a good capacity to sustain and build upon the improvements that have already been introduced.
- The school's evaluation of all aspects of its work is accurate. School leaders have a clear view of what is working well and recognise what needs to be improved further. Plans for continued improvement are detailed and precise. They identify clearly how things will be improved and how the impact of improvements on students' progress will be evaluated.
- Leaders are bringing about marked improvements to the quality of teaching. This is being achieved by providing carefully tailored training opportunities. These training opportunities are linked closely to overcoming shortfalls in students' attainment and progress. Regular checks are made to evaluate the quality of teaching. Staff work closely together. They consider their teaching, share what is working well and help each other to improve any areas they feel could be better. Staff morale is high.
- School leaders ensure that only those teachers who are able to demonstrate that they have improved students' progress are rewarded through promotion or increases in salary. They have proved to be successful in eradicating the weakest teaching. They also recognise that in some areas there is more to be done. For example, not all teachers apply the school's policy for marking students' work as thoroughly as they should.
- Staff who have responsibility for subject leadership are also making a helpful contribution to improving students' progress, especially so in English and mathematics. Information about students' progress is analysed in detail and is used to plan lessons and to identify priorities for students' to improve their progress. However, some subject leaders do not do enough to ensure that all teachers use assessment information as effectively as they should.
- The response to the online survey Parent View represented a relatively small proportion of parents. Almost a quarter of these parents said they would not recommend the school to others. However, the school's own surveys of larger numbers of parents are much more positive about all aspects of the schools' work. The school liaises closely with parents and keeps them well informed about their children's academic progress and their personal development. In the event of any problems the school is quick to make contact with parents and to provide support. Parents are kept well informed about the school's drive to promote home-based learning as part of improving their children's progress.
- The school has fully integrated the changes made to the National Curriculum. For the time being senior leaders have chosen to retain the use of National Curriculum levels as a means of assessing students' attainment and progress. The curriculum and additional activities, such as assemblies provide students with good opportunities to learn about important features of the British way of life and the values on which it has evolved. Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They receive good advice when considering how they might extend their education and for entering the world of work.
- The curriculum supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. It is also playing an increasingly effective part in the improvements to students' academic progress. Students are appreciative and express their enjoyment about the good range of additional activities, clubs and educational visits that the school provides. These include trips to the theatre, school productions, participation in regional competitions for creative dance and football tours to Barcelona and Milan. Students experience considerable success in a wide range of sports competitions.
- School leaders are making good use of all additional funding, such the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch up funding, to provide support for those who are eligible. This funding is helping to improve students' progress. However, more needs to be done, for example to support the progress of the most-able students. This year the school commissioned an external moderation of its use of the pupil premium

funding, which was judged to be effective.

- School leaders are meticulous in checking on the attendance, behaviour, progress and well-being of the small number of students who are taught offsite.
- The local authority is providing the school with good support to sustain the current improvements in students' progress and the quality of teaching. The local authority has also brokered the arrangement whereby the school links with leaders and governors from Sandringham School. This arrangement is also providing school leaders with highly effective support.
- Arrangements to ensure that students are safe meet requirements and are applied effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - New appointments to the governing body have added to an experienced and knowledgeable group who have a wide range of relevant skills. They are strong advocates for the school's work. They are very supportive and are well placed to challenge leaders if they feel any element of the school's work is not being as successful as it should be.
 - Governors have a clear insight into how well the various groups of students are making progress. They know how the school's performance compares to that of other schools. They check with great care to ensure that additional funding, such as the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch up funding, is helping improve students' progress.
 - Governors are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching. They have a good understanding of how teachers are rewarded for bringing about improvements in students' progress. They also visit regularly and observe lessons in partnership with school leaders.
 - Governors are meticulous in fulfilling their responsibilities to keep students safe. They ensure that the arrangements for safeguarding students are effective and meet requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. It has improved considerably since the last inspection. Students' conduct around the school is exemplary and staff manage behaviour well. There are very few instances in lessons when progress is slowed by lack of concentration. However, some students do not take enough care in making sure their handwriting is as neat as it should be.
- School leaders have overseen a significant reduction in the numbers of students excluded for inappropriate behaviour, to the extent that levels are now below those found nationally. If students do misbehave, the school has effective systems for managing behaviour and for supporting them to overcome their difficulties and catch up with their learning.
- Attendance is close to the national average. A significant decrease has been achieved in the previously high level of persistent absenteeism. This has been reduced to a level that is well below that found nationally.
- Students of all ages are eager to take responsibility and to fulfil leadership roles. Students are proud to be prefects and undertake their duties well. Older students listen to younger students reading. They also visit primary school to listen to pupils read. Sixth form students present high quality assemblies, including one about their visit to the site of the Auschwitz concentration camp. During the inspection Year 9 students, supported by teachers, led physical education lessons for their peer group, displaying confidence and skill.
- Students are knowledgeable about British values and the institutions that underpin the successful functioning of society. They show care and respect towards those who come from other backgrounds and cultures. They are also very aware and supportive of those who they know to be less fortunate than themselves.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Parents are confident that their children are

safe at the school and students agree.

- Arrangements to ensure that students are safe are effective and meet current requirements. The school undertakes thorough checks into the background of staff when making appointments and to ensure that they are appropriately qualified. Leaders also check to ensure the site is safe and does not present any risk to students. They are equally well prepared and vigilant when managing offsite activities and educational visits.
- The provision to support the most vulnerable students, including those who are taught offsite, and to promote the personal development of all is a significant strength of the school's work. It also provides the basis from which students are increasingly thriving academically. Students say they are confident that should they face any personal difficulties staff will do everything they can to help them. Students who spoke with inspectors were full of praise for the help they receive with their academic progress and in overcoming any personal difficulties they may have.
- Students say that bullying in its various forms is very rare. Students are knowledgeable about what constitutes bullying and know what is needed to resolve any problems. Should difficulties arise, students are confident that staff will act swiftly and effectively to support them and to find an amicable resolution to the issue. The school is highly effective in its work to ensure that students are fully aware of the potential risks posed by misuse of the internet and social media.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teachers do not always set work at the right level or with a suitable degree of challenge for the most-able students or for boys. In some subjects, teachers do not study the available assessment information sufficiently to provide a sound basis for preparing the next stage in students learning.
- The teaching of science is improving. However, the work set in this subject is not always pitched at the right level and standards and progress lag behind that found in English and mathematics.
- Teachers' assessments are usually accurate and students are increasingly well informed about the levels they are achieving and about their target grades. The marking of students' work by some teachers is excellent. The school's policy of marking work, using yellow sheets on which students make their responses in green pen, is proving to be highly effective. However, a few teachers do not mark students' work regularly or make sure that students follow up the advice that marking gives them.
- In some lessons not enough is done to promote the speaking and listening skills of lower ability students. At such time teachers miss opportunities to involve students in debate and are too ready to provide answers, rather than challenging students to work things out for themselves.
- Effective teaching in English ensures that an ever-increasing proportion of students are making good progress. Teachers also develop students' reading skills well. Time is regularly allocated to improving reading during English lessons and in many other subjects. The basic skills of mathematics are also taught well and reinforced in many subjects across the curriculum.
- Teaching assistants often provide good quality help for those students who sometimes struggle with their learning. This is particularly the case for those students who face the most significant challenges. The support they receive is good and is tailored carefully to their needs.
- Interventions to support students at all stages who have fallen behind are becoming increasingly effective. The school has identified a group of Year 10 students who are at risk of under achieving in the GCSE examinations in Year 11. Additional sessions, comprising one and a half hours each on three evenings a week, are available. Word of the success of these sessions has spread and other students are attending voluntarily.
- Good provision for homework, under the banner of 'Home Based Learning', is also having a positive impact on students' attitudes to learning and on their progress.

- School leaders and subject leaders are overseeing significant improvements in teaching. Features that are improving include the management of students' behaviour, the use of praise to motivate students and the clarity with which teachers ensure that students are clear about what they are going to learn. Positive relationships between teachers and their students are a significant strength.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- When compared with the national average not enough of the most-able students attain the higher A* or A grade passes in GCSE examinations.
- While improving, students' attainment and progress in science remains lower than found in English and mathematics.
- The rate of students' progress in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is also improving. However, the speaking and listening skills of some lower attaining students are not as good as found for similar students elsewhere.
- In 2014, and in proceeding years, standards as measured by the key indicator of 5 A*-C GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, were below average. The proportion of students making or exceeding the expected progress was also lower than found nationally, other than in the proportion making expected progress in English.
- The current Year 11 are on course to attain significantly higher standards and make better progress than seen in previous years. The school's assessments and the work seen in students' books affirms that the proportion likely to gain 5A*-C GCSE passes, including English and mathematics is on course to be broadly average when compared with last years national figures. These projections have already been moderated and externally verified by subject specialists. In terms of their progress the outcomes for these students are also on course to compare favourably with the proportions making and exceeding the expected progress nationally in 2014.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- There are strong indications that the picture of improving standards is set to be sustained. Predictions for the students in Year 10, again evident in the work seen in their books, shows they are on course to do even better than the current Year 11. Standards for the end of Key Stage 3 for the current Year 9 students are on course to be the highest for some years with more students than previously exceeding the expected rates of progress.
- Disabled students and those who have a special educational need are also making better progress than in previous years. Current assessments show their attainment and progress now compare favourably with similar students in other schools. The school meets the needs of these students well.
- Students who are entitled to benefit from the Year 7 catch up funding (those who started school in Year 7 not having attained the expected National Curriculum Level 4 in English and mathematics) are also making better progress than in previous years. The school has set up a nurture group for these students which is helping them to become increasingly confident learners. While they are making good progress from their starting points, the most marked improvements are evident in their reading.
- In recent years the school has struggled to close the attainment gaps between disadvantaged students and others in the school as well as with other students elsewhere. In 2014, these students, when compared with other in the school and students elsewhere, were almost a grade behind others in English and close to one a half grades behind in mathematics. This year, when compared with the 2014 national data, students will be less than one grade behind in both English and mathematics when compared with others in the school and with students in schools elsewhere. This year's results for disadvantaged students have also been moderated externally.

- The school makes careful checks on the progress of the small number of students who are taught offsite at other venues. These students are making good progress and are gradually overcoming the challenges they face to their learning.
- Students who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language settle in well when they join the school with many going on to make good progress.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Leadership and management of the sixth form requires improvement. This because too few students attain the higher grades in their AS level and A level examinations. However, there are clear signs of improvement. Being part of the Welwyn Hatfield Sixth Form Consortium means that opportunities are readily available for students to follow whatever academic or vocational course they wish.
- The behaviour and safety of students in the sixth form is exemplary. They apply themselves well during lessons. They have the skills needed to work hard when they are allocated independent study time. For example, students undertake additional study during the holiday leading up to starting sixth form in order to be as well prepared as possible. Sixth form students also act as mentors to younger students by, for example, listening to them read. Students also raised significant funds for charity and won a regional business and enterprise competition.
- Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement because it does not focus closely enough on ensuring that all the most-able students can attain the higher grades of which they are capable. However, teaching is successful in engaging students and in enabling them to sustain their interest. In discussion with inspectors students were full of praise for the quality of the teaching they receive. Leaders have also worked effectively with teachers to ensure that assessments are accurate.
- Achievement in the sixth form also requires improvement. Students' prior attainment on entry to the sixth form is lower than found nationally. The consortium has also raised its entry requirement for academic courses to GCSE grade B. Students are given the opportunity to re-sit their GCSEs if they do not have a high enough grade. Effective support means that almost all students gain the grades they need to move on. However, progress measures, while improving, are below those found nationally. Outcomes in AS level examinations, A levels and vocational courses are lower than found in the majority of sixth forms.
- In 2014 all students who left at the end of Year 13 either continued their education or gained employment. Students are currently on course for the same outcome in the current year. They are provided with good guidance to help this to happen.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 117525 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 462084 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 658 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 66 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Graham Clay |
| Headteacher | Glen Pettengell (Acting Headteacher) |
| Date of previous school inspection | 10 July 2013 |
| Telephone number | 01707 351350 |
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