

Sir John Leman High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	137055
Local Authority	N/A
Inspection number	385570
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Adrian Lyons HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	13–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1318
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	254
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Green
Headteacher	Jeremy Rowe
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2009
School address	Ringsfield Road Beccles Suffolk NR34 9PG
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 31 lessons and 31 teachers. Other teachers were seen for brief parts of lessons. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, groups of staff and leaders. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school and departmental development documents as well as students' work and assessment data. They also scrutinised 241 parental questionnaires, 150 students' questionnaires and eight questionnaires returned by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well do leaders monitor and evaluate the school's performance and use this evaluation to secure improvement in all aspects of the school's work, and are recent improvements sustainable?
- How well does provision meet the needs of different groups of students and lead to good progress?
- How good is the school in preparing students for the sixth form and life after school?
- What has been the school's response to the recent Ofsted English subject inspection?

Information about the school

The school is larger than average with a geographically wide and varied catchment area. It has a lower than average proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals, and a low proportion of ethnic minority students. The proportion with identified special educational needs and/ or disabilities is just below the national average, but the proportion with statements is above average. The school has technology specialist status. It is currently subject to reorganisation in the local area. It is in its first year of operation as an academy being one of the new academy converters. It has National Healthy Schools Status and Arts Mark Silver Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. There is a strong record of improvement in several areas since the last inspection providing evidence of the school's good capacity for further improvement. These improvements include raising attainment in the main school and the sixth form, improving behaviour and more systematic leadership at all levels. Even so, there remain some inconsistencies in provision and outcomes. For example, students with statements of special needs make progress which is a little better than their peers whilst those on school action or school action plus do less well. There is also some variation between some subjects. In the summer 2011 examinations, attainment at the end of both Year 11 and Year 13 was in line with the national average. Students' progress from entry to the end of Key Stage 4 is good, placing the school in the top 25% of similar schools nationally. There has been a clear upward trend in attainment over recent years, although school leaders and staff recognise the need for further improvement. The school's own evaluation of its strengths and areas for improvement is accurate.

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have very confident subject knowledge and classroom relationships are very productive. There is often a well-paced set of activities that build learning step by step. Throughout the school, students are very motivated and engaged. As a result, the large majority of students make good progress. In less successful lessons, the use of assessment to adapt teaching to meet the needs of different learners is a less well-developed aspect. Students are not always sufficiently challenged. The school's use of data to support learning and target setting has improved. Teachers are very positive about this development, but some are not yet confident enough to use the data to set sufficiently challenging subject specific targets for their students.

Behaviour is good. Inspectors observed students in lessons, on the corridors and around the school during break and at the beginning of the school day. They found the school to be a calm, well-ordered and very friendly working environment.

A significant strength of the school is what one parent described as the 'broad range of extra-curricular activities aimed at a wide spectrum of students.' There is also a wide range of activities aimed at preparation for the world of work and adult life. This, together with a wide range of academic and vocational options supporting students' achievement, provides evidence of a good curriculum.

The school's specialist technology status is now having a positive impact on raising

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standards and improving provision in this and other schools. Over the last three years the school has been instrumental and innovative in building highly effective partnerships, for example with local primary schools. The vocational North Suffolk Skills Centre, jointly established with other local upper schools, has had a powerful impact on the attainment of around half of Year 11 students.

Attendance remains a significant challenge for the school. Despite the strong vocational curriculum and average attendance overall, some groups of students have below average attendance. There is a close connection with their weaker achievement. The school has put some effective processes in place but there is a need for more rigorous action and enforcement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by refining the target setting and monitoring arrangements especially for students with special educational needs.
- Improve attendance particularly of key groups of students by
 - greater emphasis on the importance of attendance
 - increased rigour in the follow up of absence and the enforcement of attendance.
- Improve assessment in order to support learning and promote progress through
 - more rigorous monitoring of the regularity and quality of marking
 - ensuring that marking gives students clear feedback on how to improve their work
 - setting targets for all students that are challenging and carefully monitoring their progress towards these.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In summer 2011, the proportion of students gaining five GCSE grades C or above including English and mathematics was in line with the national average. The school's assessment information predicts that current Year 11 students are on track to do better than this. Data shows that students make good progress during their time in this school. Lesson observations confirm the picture of good progress, although some subjects are more successful than others. The progress of a group of students on school action and school action plus is less positive than that of their peers. This, to some extent, results from lessons not always providing appropriate support and challenge for them but there also exist contributory factors such as absence for medical reasons adversely affecting progress.

In most lessons students make good progress. They benefit from teachers' confident subject knowledge for example in a French lesson where students' vocabulary was extended through a skilful question and answer session. Learning is further enhanced by imaginative and creative use of resources, including technology. Good learning was also characterised by careful consideration of students' responses,

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targeted intervention and the use of effective questioning techniques during lessons, modifying tasks where necessary in the light of their responses. This resulted in students having a clear understanding of how well they are doing and a consistently good level of challenge.

Students understand how to be safe and feel safe within classrooms. The school recognises that access arrangements to the site provide particular challenges and is reviewing this. In every other respect students feel completely safe. The school has ‘healthy schools’ status. Students understand important factors affecting their health and respond through making healthy eating choices and high levels of participation in sport. Students’ contribution to the school and wider community is excellent. For example many older students help younger groups in lessons in this and partner schools. Students are very proud of their school and the student voice is very strong. Students are great ambassadors and they are very well regarded by local employers and the local community in town due to activities such as the carol service and local awards ceremonies. The school has strong additional local links through for example ‘Activities for All’, a fund to support disadvantaged students and families. The global dimension is very strong with a sustainable link to a school in Kenya and its local community. There are regular student exchanges and when the students from Kenya visit Sir John Lemman they provide an opportunity for students to experience a different culture. There is also a link to a French school, with similar impact. All this, together with students’ reaction to charity appeals, the opportunities for music and art and curriculum work on issues such as slavery, results in excellent spiritual, moral social and cultural development.

Students are well prepared for adult life and the world of work through the many opportunities in the school curriculum for students to develop enterprise skills and work related learning.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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contribute to their future economic well-being	
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' confident subject knowledge is demonstrated in appropriate planning and the use of varied teaching methods, which motivate students and secure good progress. For example, in English lessons teachers' understanding of examination requirements enabled students to practice and build examination skills. A performing arts lesson expertly built up learning through a series of short tasks switching between teacher direction, students' participation and group discussion. The teacher and supporting sixth former, who had been appropriately briefed by the teacher before the lesson, gave well-targeted support to individuals and groups facilitating rapid progress. In less effective lessons, teachers spoke too long to hold the attention of some students. Students with special educational needs generally work steadily and enjoy their learning most of the time, as shown by their interest and engagement across a range of subjects. In most lessons their needs are met well, but in some lessons work is not sufficiently matched to the needs of all groups. Verbal feedback is offered to students during lessons. Some teachers miss the opportunity to inform students on how to make further improvements through regular marking and constructive written comments. In some subjects such as English, teachers use assessment well to adapt their lessons to the needs of different students. Teachers and students alike make good use of an assessment package to track assessments. This is relatively new and the use of this valuable information to enhance progress and meet the specific needs of all groups of students is inconsistent.

There are many strengths in the school's curriculum including a wide range of Key Stage 4 courses that meet the needs and interests of the full range of students. Work related learning is strong. Very strong links with a wide range of employers have been made possible through the post of a dedicated enterprise manager. Currently students' experience of enterprise and work related learning is strong but is lacking coherence and progression because there does not exist a clear set of learning objectives that can be assessed.

There are some excellent examples of clearly targeted support for groups of potentially vulnerable students. Good quality advice and guidance are provided enabling students to make confident and well-informed choices about their future.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3

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The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders communicate a clear vision and sense of ambition which enthuses staff and students. As a result of effective leadership, there has been a steady improvement in outcomes for students with, for example a very significant rise in attainment in mathematics. The gap between different groups of students' attainment and progress such as that between boys and girls is narrowing. There is a climate of 'shared vision and ambition' that has enabled middle leaders to improve and develop their leadership roles since the last inspection; they told inspectors that they are listened to and valued by senior leadership. The middle leaders' forum has provided a vehicle for them to share good practice and identify key areas for development. This has resulted in an 'aspiring middle leaders' programme' being developed by one of the faculty leaders. The recent appointment of a data manager and the introduction of a different tracking software package have enabled middle leaders to be more proactive in the use of data to monitor the work of their departments. However, currently many success criteria focus on task completion rather than the impact of outcomes. The feedback from the recent Ofsted subject inspection of English has been used well to share good practice and areas for improvement which may inform the work of other subjects.

The cycle of regular departmental and faculty reviews, together with the growing accountability of leaders at all levels, is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Targeted feedback is provided for teachers so that weaknesses are identified early and appropriate support provided.

Governors fulfil their responsibilities well and identify areas for better focus. All statutory policies for equality of opportunity are in place and reviewed regularly. Having been successful in narrowing the attainment gap between most groups it is now focusing its efforts on the remaining small groups whose progress and attendance is not as good as their peers. Governors meet their statutory duties. Appropriate 'safer recruitment' training has been undertaken as appropriate. The school adopts recommended good practice on child protection and procedures are of a good quality. The school works very well with other key agencies to reduce the risk of harm to students. The school has undertaken an in-depth audit of community cohesion. The provision is monitored and reported to governors through a written report from the community cohesion coordinator. The school has undertaken a clear analysis of its students' religious, ethnic and socio-economic context. The good and improving outcomes for students give evidence of good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The improved and now good provision and leadership in the sixth form is beginning to be seen in improved outcomes. However, while attainment is on a rising trend, results in summer 2011 were in line with those found nationally. The proportion of students who gained the very highest grades was below average. Inspection evidence indicates that students are now making good progress in lessons. Attendance and retention rates are broadly average. The recently restructured sixth form leadership has taken effective steps to improve provision for students. As in the main school, there remains some variability across subjects. The quality of teaching which is good and mirrors the strengths and weaknesses found in the main school. For example, confident subject knowledge was displayed in a Year 12 lesson the most able students were challenged by the teacher to develop very complex philosophical ideas but this left other students as passive observers.

There are flexible entry requirements to the sixth form and students say that opportunities to mix and match courses to meet their needs is a strong feature. Improving levels of guidance have enabled students to follow a pathway in which they are most likely to achieve well. High attaining students are able to access Open University material and thus study degree level work alongside their school subjects. The North Suffolk Skills Centre is also an option for level 3 courses in engineering. An annual induction conference is held which helps students make a smooth transition to their post- 16 education. There are improved facilities for private study, which are valued by students and increase the time available for work. Students are given good support with their higher education applications through an improved tutor team; many gain a place at their first choice university.

Students are prepared to take on leadership roles within the school and provide good role models for younger students in this and other schools. Some students give

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valuable support for improving literacy skills. Students take responsibility for planning and running a broad range of charity and social events through the Sixth Form Council.

The focus on the monitoring of teaching and learning in the sixth form is having a positive impact. Departmental reviews include analysis of sixth form data and there is a greater level of accountability emerging. Target setting and monitoring are effective and contributing to improved standards. Increasing sixth form numbers shows that the measures to improve recruitment are working. The reorganisation of sixth form tutors and their pastoral role has enabled the monitoring of students’ progress to be much more rigorous.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of the parents who responded are highly supportive of the school and what it offers. A typical comment was, ‘All credit to Sir John Lemman High School. We as parents are thoroughly delighted with our daughter’s education and pastoral care.’ A small minority of parents raised concerns regarding a range of issues including the extent to which the school values their suggestions and concerns, the school’s dealing with behaviour, the preparation of students for future life, the development of healthy lifestyles, helping parents and carers to support their child’s learning. Inspectors explored each of these issues, but agreed with the large majority of parents who completed the questionnaires and who were highly supportive of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sir John Lemman High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 241 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1381 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	68	28	151	63	14	6	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	80	33	146	61	11	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	63	26	146	61	19	8	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	58	24	144	60	24	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	58	24	157	65	12	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	39	16	138	57	44	18	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	14	159	66	33	14	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	52	22	141	59	25	10	4	2
The school meets my child’s particular needs	52	22	159	66	22	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	67	28	129	54	25	10	5	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	13	137	57	30	12	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	51	21	154	64	19	8	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	72	30	148	61	12	5	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Sir John Leman High School, NR34 9PG

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work, your life in school and all you do. Some of you completed questionnaires which were very helpful to us in discovering your views. We believe your school is a good one and here are the reasons.

- The school has a strong recent record of improvement. Most, but not all of you are making good progress.
- The wide range of courses offered, including those at North Suffolk Skills Centre, meets your needs and interests very well. This helps you achieve well. A special aspect of your school is the wide range of out-of-lesson activities. Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- You are well cared for, supported and guided. The relationships between students and with your teachers are very positive, as is your behaviour. The school is effective in helping you to be healthy and safe. Most of you clearly enjoy school, make an excellent contribution to the community and are well prepared for adult life.
- Teaching is good. Your teachers help you to understand your work and usually provide a variety of activities to involve you in the lessons.

While we judged your school to be good, the leaders of the school are keen for it to be even better. We have asked them ensure you always get useful feedback on your work, and to adapt the work so that is always set to ensure it is appropriate to your ability and challenges you all. In some cases the progress of students is not good enough because some students do not attend regularly. We have asked the school to work harder at improving attendance, but clearly this needs your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

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