

# The Sele School

Welwyn Road, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG14 2DG

## Inspection dates

19 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Students' achievement in the main school is good; they make good progress across a wide range of subjects. In particular, students make very good progress in English. Results in external examinations have improved well over time and most are above average.
- Teaching is consistently very effective in helping pupils to learn. Teaching in most lessons is good and the amount of outstanding teaching is increasing across subjects. Teachers nearly always create a highly productive learning climate and engage students well.
- Students show good attitudes to learning in most lessons. Their behaviour within the school community is very good as shown by their respect for and cooperation with each other. Ensuring students' safety is given high priority by all in the school.
- The school is improving strongly in almost all respects because of good leadership and management and very effective governance. Managers ensure that teaching and students' achievement continue to improve.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students in the sixth form do not make strong progress and achieve their full potential. Their results at GCE A level, although broadly average, are not improving quickly enough and there is much underperformance at GCE AS level.
- Outstanding teaching is not yet widespread across the school. Sharing of the most effective practice across teaching teams is starting to take place but is not yet fully established.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons and made shorter visits to seven other lessons.
- Inspectors observed several intervention classes in English and mathematics that are additional to students' main timetable.
- Inspectors held meetings with three groups of pupils, the headteacher and senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and middle managers.
- Inspectors examined a questionnaire completed by staff, along with 27 responses submitted by parents and carers to the online web-site ParentView. Recent surveys of parents' and students' views undertaken by the school were also considered.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documents including the self-evaluation report, governing body minutes, improvement plans, behaviour records and documents related to performance management.

## Inspection team

Philippa Francis, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Anne Pepper

Additional inspector

Paul O'Shea

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school converted to academy status on 1 August 2012.
- The school is smaller than the average sized secondary school and has a small sixth form. The number of students joining the sixth form is increasing year on year.
- Around a quarter of students are eligible for pupil premium which is higher than average.
- The proportion of students who receive school action support is higher than average; the percentage of those at school action plus is below. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is higher than average.
- More students than average join the school at times other than in Year 7.
- The school is the lead agency for a children's centre based on the school's site. It also is in a soft federation with the neighbouring primary school.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Share widely across the school the skill and expertise of teachers whose practice is consistently outstanding, in order to support other teachers to raise the quality of their teaching to match the very best.
- Raise achievement in the sixth form by:
  - enabling students to adapt more quickly to the different learning styles in the sixth form
  - strengthening management systems and the monitoring of students' progress
  - accelerating the implementation of improvement actions and evaluating their impact rigorously.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Results in external examinations have increased over the last three years. Results in English have been consistently high over time; results in mathematics increased notably to be above average in 2012 after a marked dip in 2011. Almost all students are successful in gaining more than five GCSE grades at A\* to C. The proportion of students gaining GCSE A\* - A grades increased in 2012.
- Students' progress is strong across most subjects in the main school. Progress in science and English has been a particular strength over time.
- Inspectors' observations of students' progress in lessons and as shown by their work confirmed their good progress, their well developed reading and writing skills and their good grasp of mathematical concepts.
- No groups of students underperform compared to their peers, including those who join the school after Year 7. The achievement of students eligible for Pupil Premium in mathematics improved markedly in 2012. The progress made by disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good and is a strength of the school.
- Results in external examinations in the sixth form improved slightly in 2012. However, students who complete Year 13 rarely exceed their minimum target grade based on their prior attainment. Most underperform in Year 12, in part because they find the change in the style of learning from the main school to the sixth form challenging, and have to cover considerable ground to catch up in Year 13.
- Sixth form students mature and gain valuable personal and social skills during their study programme. A high proportion develop good team work and leadership skills through their roles as mentors or senior students. The proportion of sixth form students who secure places in their first choice universities has increased notably to around three-quarters of leavers.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good. Teachers' expectations are high; they use their skill and knowledge well to motivate, engage and involve students in their own learning. As a result, students nearly always respond keenly and they participate well in lessons. A highly purposeful learning culture pervades the school.
- Teachers use a range of strategies well. They vary activities and use group and paired work frequently to make lessons interesting and fun. Teachers manage students' learning carefully, for example, by using seating plans or a range of resources highly effectively to make sure that learning opportunities are maximised.
- Students often read in lessons and care is taken to ensure their writing skills are developed well. The influence of the school's longstanding performing arts specialism across the curriculum is strong and means that students' artistic and creative skills are often well-developed.
- Assessment is frequently used to good effect and is integrated well into lessons. In the most effective lessons, teachers assess students' understanding skilfully through questions or observations of their work and use this information constructively to plan and reshape their

lessons to ensure that topics are well understood.

- In a few lessons, teachers tend to help students too much, for example, by accepting insufficiently full answers to questions or by not probing more deeply where it is clear that a student's knowledge is superficial. Sometimes, teachers do not use assessment well enough and move on too quickly through learning points without securing students' full understanding.
- Additional classes in English and mathematics and other intervention activities are highly effective. Literacy is developed very well by teachers across subjects.
- Teaching in creative and performing arts is often outstanding. Teaching in mathematics is improving as shown by the much improved results in external tests in 2012.
- The relationships between teachers and students in the sixth form are highly productive. Teachers recognise the need to support students to develop their independent learning skills and have a clear focus on this during lessons. The provision of academic support and guidance has recently improved but this has not been soon enough to prevent underperformance in Year 12 in recent years.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Students are well behaved, courteous and friendly. Around the school, behaviour is very good and students are clearly proud and happy to be members of the school. Students respect and enjoy the highly pleasant school site and play their part in ensuring it is well maintained, for example, by ensuring low levels of litter.
- In lessons, students are diligent and attentive; they mostly contribute well to successful learning. Sometimes, students are overly content to be directed by the teacher and tend to become passive. In a few less effective lessons, low levels of disruption exist.
- Parents and carers are highly positive about behaviour in the school; bullying is very rare and dealt with robustly. Students express considerable confidence in the school's systems for tackling incidences of poor behaviour or bullying.
- A student survey carried out by the school identified that a few younger students feel that a minority of their peers should take more responsibility for their own learning. The recent introduction of a merit card system is helping well to reinforce aspects of good behaviour.
- Attendance is above average and has increased over recent years; persistent absence has decreased. No groups have low attendance. Students realise the value of good attendance.
- No students have been permanently excluded for a number of years. Fixed term exclusions are high but have decreased in number over the last two years and the number of days lost through exclusion has reduced notably.
- The school's evidence of attendance and behaviour of students who join the school other than in Year 7, and who may have a track record of concerns in these areas, shows the clear impact of the systems and support in place on improving these students' attitudes to learning.
- The need for senior staff intervention or the use of isolation to tackle disruptive behaviour is very rare. Students feel very safe in school; they understand the systems in place to ensure their safety. Their awareness of the importance of keeping safe is high.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher, managers and governors have high expectations and ambition for the school. This is exemplified by the improved achievement in the main school, the increase in attendance over recent years and the highly positive climate for learning that has been developed across the school. However, managers' and governors' ambition for the sixth form has yet to be fully realised.
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work are well established; however, these systems are only just starting to have an impact on improving the sixth form, where progress to improve students' achievement beyond average is too slow.
- The inclusiveness of the school is rightly central to its ethos and links well with its place in the community. Managers are highly skilled in helping the students who join the school other than in Year 7 to settle quickly and work productively. Students from a wide ability range are welcomed into the sixth form; managers make considerable effort to ensure a positive outcome is achieved for them all and are largely successful in this.
- Managers develop the curriculum flexibly and responsively, ensuring a broad and balanced curriculum is in place across the main school which also contributes very well to students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Robust performance management arrangements are in place. A comprehensive lesson observation scheme is used to evaluate the quality of teaching. Through joint observations with several senior managers, inspectors confirmed the rigour and accuracy of the scheme and its impact on improving teaching.
- Self-evaluation is well established and largely accurate. Inspectors' judgements are a close match to the school's view of itself. The school's strategies to improve literacy and to boost achievement in English and mathematics, including through effective use of pupil premium funding, are proving very successful. This is shown clearly in the marked narrowing of the gap in results between students who are eligible for free school meals and their peers in mathematics.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. Particular attention is paid to negating any risks to safeguarding that result from the use of the school site for external activities, such as adult and community classes.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - is good, providing challenge and support. Governors know the school well and are involved in evaluating the quality of subject departments. Governors are aware of the need to increase the focus on improvement in the sixth form.
  - provides thorough and highly effective oversight of the school's finances.
  - supports and encourages the many productive partnerships that the school is involved with, for example, the soft federation with the neighbouring primary school.
  - has ensured that statutory requirements are met in relation to safeguarding and equality legislation and has supported the school's conversion to academy status very effectively.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138484
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	408415

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	427
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	69
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gareth Morgan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nick Binder
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 May 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01992 581455
<b>Fax number</b>	01992 500408
<b>Email address</b>	head@sele.herts.sch.uk



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