

# The St Leonards Academy

Edinburgh Campus, Edinburgh Road, St Leonards on Sea, TN38 8HH

**Inspection dates** 15–16 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	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 is improving rapidly from very low starting points when they arrive. A high proportion of them are attaining levels that are at least in line with the national average.
- Teaching is good in many subjects including English, mathematics and science.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the academy. They feel safe and know who to go to for help.
- The Principal and senior leaders have dramatically improved the quality of students' education by increasing the amounts of good and better teaching.
- The board of directors are highly effective in holding the academy to account for its performance.
- Students who may be vulnerable and those who are disabled and have special educational needs are supported extremely well throughout the academy.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers do not use the academy's information about students' learning to set work that is challenging enough for the more able.
- A few teachers do not adhere to the academy's effective marking policy.
- The teaching of reading, writing and communication is not good in all subjects.
- There are still some students who do not turn up on time at the start of the day and for some lessons.

## Information about this inspection

- Forty-seven part-lessons were observed by inspectors, many of them alongside senior leaders.
- The quality of marking was scrutinised.
- Meetings took place with students, staff, leaders and managers, and members of the governing body.
- Some students were heard reading by inspectors.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including those the academy uses to check how well it is doing, improvement plans, policies and safeguarding arrangements.
- By the end of the inspection visit there were 81 responses to the on-line parent survey (Parent View). These, and the 57 questionnaires that were returned by staff, were taken into account.

## Inspection team

John Seal, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gary Kirkley

Additional Inspector

Roger Fenwick

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Bray

Additional Inspector

Roger Parry

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this academy

- This academy is larger than the average-size secondary school.
- It opened on 1 September 2011 as a sponsor-led academy. The University of Brighton is the main sponsor; co-sponsors are East Sussex County Council and BT.
- Most of the students are White British.
- The proportions of disabled students and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action and school action plus, and those who have statements of special educational need, are well above average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) is well above the national average. The pupil premium is used to support those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals. Additional catch-up support is funded for 80 students in Year 7.
- The academy has a special facility for students with physical disabilities and high level autism.
- The academy works with a range of alternative providers for vocational learning, including Sussex Coast College, Plumpton College and East Sussex College Central.
- The academy is part of a federation with The Hastings Academy which was inspected separately at the same time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Improve the consistency of teaching by:
  - ensuring students' skills in reading, spelling, grammar and communication are developed consistently well in all subjects
  - making sure all teachers use the good achievement information available, to plan and prepare activities that closely match students' needs and abilities
  - ensuring all teachers apply the academy's marking policy.
- Improve students' attendance and punctuality by ensuring all teachers adhere to the academy's policies and procedures.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' progress has accelerated from very low starting points. As a result, a high proportion of students are now reaching at least average levels of attainment in an increasing number of subjects. Many students are performing at higher than average standards, especially in English, mathematics and science.
- During the academy's first year, students' attainment in mathematics was very low. The senior leaders and managers took decisive action. As a result, teachers' training, coaching and new appointments have ensured a significant improvement in students' mathematical attainment in most year groups, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- The academy no longer enters students early for GCSE mathematics, resulting in students having more time to gain higher standards.
- Students' achievement within different subjects fluctuated widely in the first year of the academy's existence because of the variable quality of teaching. In the work seen during the inspection, and the academy's analysis of students' achievement, it is clear that standards are improving securely and rapidly. Inspectors looked at a range of students' work in different subjects. Overall standards of attainment and presentations have improved significantly; especially so in mathematics and science.
- The academy has recognised the low standards of reading of many Year 7 students. A range of strategies have been introduced, including additional time for reading and the use of information and communication technology to encourage students to read using tablet computers. However, this is in the early stages of development and is not yet used consistently well across all subjects, leading to some students not being able to identify letter sounds and words (phonics) consistently enough.
- A small group of students learn off site with other providers with almost all students becoming successful in gaining qualifications and completing courses.
- With the support of the academy's sponsors, students and their families are encouraged to think about higher and further education. As a result the proportion of students who are not in education, employment or training is reducing quickly to below the national average.
- Lower attaining students and those disabled or with special educational needs are making good progress. Those students who have very complex physical and learning needs attending the special resource are included exceptionally well within the academy for all subjects. As a result, they make good progress in relation to their needs and abilities.
- The academy receives a significant amount of funding to support those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals. Senior leaders use this funding wisely and have ensured a highly effective, wide-ranging and well-managed programme of support is in place. This includes one-to-one tuition in mathematics, additional teaching assistants and additional support for further education and training. Consequently, students' progress, especially in English and mathematics, is gathering pace to close the attainment gap with their peers.
- The academy has identified Year 7 students who need additional support to improve their literacy skills. The identification of these students is highly effective and the support is put into place rapidly. Although the gains in progress are patchy, students who spoke to inspectors were very excited about using tablet computers to help them read.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Most of the teaching is good and some is outstanding. It has a significant impact on students' rapidly improving progress because of well-planned and prepared lessons that provide students with challenging and interesting work.
- Many teachers use the academy's student achievement information well to make sure students are provided with work that is hard enough to make them reflect carefully and develop a range

of skills.

- In most subjects, teachers have high expectations of what their students can achieve. They open lessons with 'learning questions' which help the students understand what they are going to learn. This was seen to good effect in English, mathematics, science and physical education.
- During lessons, teachers give students time to correct work and offer them ideas and suggestions to improve. The 'medals and missions' marking is popular with students who told inspectors that it helped them understand what they needed to do to gain higher levels and grades.
- Standards of literacy are improving rapidly, especially in the lessons where teachers focus on spelling and grammar in different subjects. Many teachers use 'key words' for their subjects to encourage students to increase their subject vocabulary and become better at talking about their learning; for example, in mathematics, Year 7 students were introduced to 'integers'.
- The students who have social and communication difficulties, or have physical and/or sensory needs are included well within lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants plan and prepare appropriate resources and activities to closely meet students' needs.
- Students told inspectors that they enjoy their learning. Older students have recognised the recent improvements being made in the quality of teaching, especially in mathematics.
- The contribution to students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is seen in many lessons. In the best lessons, there is a range of activities which enable students to work collaboratively; for example, in a GCSE English lesson, students were discussing the moral implications of conflict while studying war poems.
- Inspectors and senior leaders observed some teaching that required improvement. In these lessons, marking did not inform students about how to improve and they were not provided with activities that challenged them enough to make good progress.
- Some teachers are not yet fully proficient in providing students with information and activities to help them improve their reading and writing skills within different subjects. For example, students' grammar and spelling are not always corrected and too few opportunities were given to practise reference and story materials to improve their reading.
- The majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire have positive views on teaching. The evidence gathered during the inspection supports their views that teaching is good.

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

- Students are well behaved in nearly all lessons. There are a few lessons where teaching is uninspiring and lacks challenge; in these a few students sometimes lose interest and become restless.
- At break times and between lessons, students are courteous to each other, staff and visitors. The significant building work going on is tolerated in a patient, mature and good-humoured way.
- Students who spoke to inspectors said they felt safe in the school and would know which member of staff to go to if they needed help. Bullying is rare and dealt with effectively when it occurs. There are very few racist incidents. The number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions is low.
- Students' attendance, punctuality and general welfare in the different alternative providers are taken seriously by the academy. Senior leaders ensure that the welfare, behaviour and safety of students are monitored carefully.
- Students' attendance is regular and improving. Most students are usually punctual for their lessons and the number of latecomers at the start of the day has declined rapidly. However, there are a very small number of students who turn up late for school and lessons and are not reported or challenged by a few members of staff.
- The majority of parents who responded to the online survey regard students' behaviour as good and feel their children are looked after, safe and happy at school. The inspection team's

observations and other evidence support these views.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- Since the academy opened, the Principal and senior leaders including the board of directors have been successful in transforming the quality of education for the students. The drive for improvement is single-minded, determined and ambitious. This has been no mean feat, as the academy grew out of an amalgamation of two schools and on different sites, one of which has ongoing building and refurbishment work.
- One of the key successes has been the rapid improvement of the quality of teaching brought about by the relentless drive and rigorous approach to lesson observations by leaders and managers, good quality feedback to teachers and a highly effective programme of professional training and development.
- In addition to the regular monitoring and training, senior leaders including the board of directors ensure that teachers' appraisal and pay are directly linked to the quality of their performance in terms of accelerating students' progress. Senior leaders do not shirk from using formal procedures where appropriate to tackle teaching which does not improve enough.
- Senior leaders and governors have a very accurate understanding of what the academy does well and what it needs to do to improve further. Staff are clear about the key messages for improvement.
- Students' standards in literacy are increasing because of the focused work and accurate identification of those who need additional support and resources. However, this is not a consistently strong feature of the academy's work yet as there are a few teachers in some subjects who do not check students' spellings, correct their grammar or provide opportunities to read and write.
- Subjects, courses and training are well matched to the needs of all students. The inclusive nature of the academy is a real strength. The effective and positive links with external agencies and an on-site multi-agency centre ensure students with a range of complex needs are extremely well catered for.
- The academy's arrangements for ensuring the safeguarding of students meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The board of directors carries out its statutory duties well. It brings a wide understanding, expertise and experience to ensure the academy's long-term direction is one of continual improvement. This understanding is manifested in the directors' up-to-date understanding of information about the academy's performance. Comparisons with similar schools are made to ensure the best value can be gained for further improvements. The pupil premium funding and activities are clearly reported on and understood including the Year 7 catch-up provision. The sponsors' involvement ensures that the academy has productive links with the wider community including local businesses, schools, including the local primaries, and the local authority's services. The directors are adept and skilful in their arrangements for holding the senior leaders to account for the academy's performance and ensure that staff salaries directly reflect students' achievement. The systems for informing the directors include regular visits to lessons, checks on performance management, ensuring financial security and reports from leaders and managers and external consultants. The rapid improvements since the academy opened are testament to their ambitions for the students to receive the best education possible.

## 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>	136400
<b>Local authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	399840

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1293
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Professor Julian Crampton
<b>Principal</b>	Jenny Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01424 431691
<b>Fax number</b>	Not applicable
<b>Email address</b>	Office@hasla.org.uk



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