

Sir Herbert Leon Academy

Fern Grove, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK2 3HQ

Inspection dates

2–3 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Students, particularly the most able, have not reached the standards they are capable of, particularly in mathematics.
- Students' GCSE examination results have not been good in a range of subjects, including science, humanities, and design and technology.
- Some disabled students and those who have special educational needs have not been supported well enough. As a result, these students have not made the progress of which they are capable.
- Teaching over time has not enabled all students to achieve well.
- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good. Too often teachers do not adapt the work set to enable all students to do well.
- Systems put in place to address weaknesses in teaching have only recently begun to impact on students' achievement.
- The sixth form requires improvement because not enough students make good progress in all the subjects they study. They do best in work-related subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Achievement is improving. Current information shows students are now making faster progress than previously. Students achieve well in English.
- Leaders are transforming the academy. They have systematically addressed the weaknesses. This is improving teaching and achievement.
- Leaders at all levels have introduced clear expectations for learning. This is leading to better teaching.
- The academy has been successful in narrowing the gap in achievement between students eligible for the pupil premium and their peers.
- Students' behaviour is good. Students are friendly, welcoming and keen to learn. They feel safe and their attendance has improved.
- Governors are now providing a good level of challenge and support to the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons and heard some students read. Eighteen of the observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also made a number of shorter visits to a large number of lessons to look at specific aspects of students' work and their attitudes to learning.
- All students have been 'moved up' to the next year group since mid-June, with a new timetable in place.
- A range of students' books was looked at by inspectors to see progress over a longer period of time.
- Inspectors observed other aspects of the school's work including an assembly, tutor period, and students' arrival to school. Their behaviour and safety during the day, including at break and lunchtime, was also observed.
- Meetings were held with academy staff including subject leaders, senior leaders and staff responsible for the behaviour and safety of students. Five different groups of students were spoken to formally. In addition, many other students were spoken to both in and out of lessons.
- A meeting was held with members of the governing body including a representative of the sponsor.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation including the academy's self-evaluation, development plans, and records of student progress, behaviour and attendance. Documents relating to safeguarding and minutes of the governing body meetings were also considered.
- Inspectors considered the responses to 80 staff questionnaires.
- Parents' and carers' opinions of the academy could not be gathered through the online questionnaire, Parent View, as there were too few responses for the results to be displayed.

Inspection team

Kevin Harrison, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Bray

Additional Inspector

Glen Goddard

Additional Inspector

David Gutmann

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sir Herbert Leon Academy is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. There are slightly fewer girls than boys at the academy.
- It became part of the Academies Enterprise Trust in September 2012. When its predecessor school, Leon School and Sports College, was last inspected it was judged to be good.
- The sixth form is run in partnership with Lord Grey School.
- An Executive Principal has been overseeing the work of the academy since November 2013, following the death of the previous Principal.
- The academy works in partnership with the executive Principal's own school.
- An Acting Principal took up his post in January 2014.
- There have been considerable staff changes during this school year, at all levels.
- Over a third of the students come from minority ethnic groups. This is above the national average.
- The proportion of the students who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- Just over half of students benefit from additional government funding through the pupil premium which is almost double the national average. Pupil premium is the additional funding provided for students who are known to be eligible free school meals and looked after children.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action is below average. However, the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special education need is more than double the national average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Sixteen students are taught away from the school at Milton Keynes College and at the Stephenson Trust, studying a wide range of courses including some work-related programmes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all is at least consistently good by ensuring that:
 - work is set at the right level of difficulty, challenging all students to do well
 - teachers regularly check understanding in lessons, adapting work when necessary to ensure all students achieve their potential
 - teachers check that all students use the good quality marking to improve their work.
- Improve achievement so that it is consistently good or better for all students by ensuring that:
 - disabled students and those who have special educational needs continue to receive effective support so that they make good progress
 - students' work in mathematics is of similar quality to that in English.
- Improve achievement in the sixth form by ensuring that students' achievement is equally good in work-related and academic subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

Requires improvement

- Students join the school with standards that are generally below average. Their levels of attainment at the end of Year 11 in 2013 remained significantly below the national average. Although there have been some improvements to achievement in Year 11, results are expected to remain below the national average.
- Standards in the 2013 examinations were below average in a range of subjects, including core science, design and technology, history and geography. Current information shows that results in these subjects are expected to improve this year.
- The 2013 GCSE results showed that students supported by additional funding were half a grade behind other students in both English and mathematics. Forecasts for 2014 show that, in English, eligible students are likely to attain in line with other students, whereas in mathematics they are less than a quarter of a grade behind their peers.
- The more able students achieve well in English, but too few achieve the top grades in other subjects, including core science, history and mathematics.
- In Years 7 to 10 many of the students eligible for additional funding are making at least similar progress to their peers, and in some cases better progress. This is because of appropriate support and rigorous checking systems to make sure that any underperformance is not allowed to continue.
- Overall, student minority ethnic groups make better progress than those of White British heritage. Particularly successful are those students from Bangladeshi and African heritages.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make good progress. They, as much as the other students, benefit from the school's approach to promoting literacy across a wide range of subjects.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs have not always been well supported and, as a result, did not reach their potential. This was particularly the case for students supported at school action plus who finished Year 11 in 2013. School data for 2014 show that the achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs has improved.
- As a result of good management of teaching, students' achievement is now showing clear signs of improvement.
- Students' skills of communication and reading are well developed across the curriculum and students are encouraged to read every day. Many students also benefit from paired reading. Reading is being further promoted over the summer holidays by the availability of some free books.
- Students who attend college or a training provider make progress in line with their peers.
- Previously, many students took their mathematics GCSE early in Year 11 and some students benefited from this. The academy no longer uses early entry for GCSE examinations.
- Students in Year 7 who had help to catch-up with their reading and mathematics have improved and are now showing improved attainment in line with the national expected level.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. Although some students perform well in creative and work-related courses, achievement in academic subjects is not yet good.

The quality of teaching

Requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not been effective in enabling all students to achieve well.
- As a result of inconsistencies, the quality of teaching has not been good enough to address students' prior underachievement and enable students to catch up and achieve well.
- Students are not always challenged to achieve their potential. This is particularly the case when teachers set the same work for all students, meaning that it can be too easy or too difficult for

some.

- Some teachers have not had high enough expectations of students both in terms of the level of challenge set and with regard to presentation.
- Teaching is now improving. There is a clear understanding of what is required to ensure all students achieve well.
- There have been significant staffing changes this year, including some recent appointments. This has contributed to improvements in teaching and students have responded positively.
- Teachers' records are used to show exactly where students are in terms of their attainment. This ensures that teachers are able to see if their teaching is helping students to reach their challenging progress targets. This did not happen consistently in the past. Appropriate support is put in place for those students who are in danger of slipping behind.
- Many teachers' enthusiasm and passion for their subject capture students' interest and speed up rates of progress. This is consistently evident in the creative and work-related courses in the sixth form.
- Teachers are marking work well. This is giving clear advice on how to improve and make more progress. Many, but not all, students are using the marking to improve their work. A few teachers do not insist that students use the marking to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants are now being well deployed. Most know exactly when to stand back and encourage students to work on their own and when to provide clear support and direction. As a result, the achievement of the students they support is now improving.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well in lessons, tutor time and assemblies. For example, inspectors saw how well students worked together discussing and sharing ideas in a range of lessons. Opportunities to reflect on issues such as the lifestyle of different cultures in Africa and how this compares with life in Britain generate lots of student interest.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are increasingly proud of their academy. Many students comment that behaviour has improved significantly over the last year.
- Students are smartly dressed, friendly and well mannered. They are respectful of social, religious and cultural diversity. A student-led assembly on the significance of Ramadan captivated the interest of students of all backgrounds and they listened attentively in silence.
- Students are welcoming. The incoming Year 7 students were made to feel at home during their transition day visit.
- Students make their way to lessons promptly after break and lunchtime, coming well prepared to learn.
- Both in lessons and around school most students behave well. They cooperate and are keen to do well. Occasionally, a few students do lose interest in their learning.
- Students stated that there is little bullying and any incidents are dealt with promptly and effectively. They are aware of the different types of bullying that can take place.
- During assembly and the memorial service for the previous Principal, behaviour was impeccable. Students are polite and respectful.
- Attendance over time has been just below national averages, and persistent absence has been much worse. A robust system to address this has been introduced and has been successful, with overall attendance rising this school year, and persistent absence having fallen significantly.
- However, the attendance of those few students who study at college and in alternate education in the upper school is below that of their peers. Close monitoring is now resulting in improvements.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Care is taken to ensure that the academy is safe and that procedures and practice are rigorous, for example first aid and fire drill practice.

The leadership and management are good

- Strong leadership has given the academy a clear direction and has brought about rapid improvements, particularly in improving the consistency and quality of teaching. This has begun to transform the academy. A member of support staff, reflecting the views of other staff, commented 'I have noticed huge improvements all round.' Staff morale is high.
- Both staff and students confirm that rates of improvement have accelerated as a result of the management structure, particularly through the work of the Executive Principal and the Acting Principal.
- Proven systems to monitor and track student achievement and attendance are firmly in place and becoming embedded. As a result, achievement and attendance are now improving.
- Middle leadership has been considerably strengthened across the academy. Middle leaders are working well to raise student achievement by ensuring that good and better teaching is becoming the norm. A teacher commented, 'The management of the school is really supportive and helps improve my own teaching; professional development is excellent.'
- Additional funding is used wisely to support students who may be disadvantaged. Close monitoring ensures that it is helping students to achieve their full potential.
- Leaders have introduced rigorous systems for managing staff performance. Staff understand that pay awards for teachers are linked securely to students' achievement.
- The partnership with the Executive Principal's own outstanding school is enabling the academy to train teachers themselves. This is ensuring high quality staff are available across a range of subjects including in key shortage areas such as mathematics and science.
- The curriculum for Years 7 to 11 offers a broad range of subjects, providing a firm foundation for students' future study or employment. Leaders have ensured that there is more time for students to study English and mathematics to raise achievement in these key areas.
- The sixth form works in partnership with a local school. This has enabled students to have a wide range of choice of subjects at different levels which can be studied. Currently plans are in place for the sixth form to operate independently as the number of students grows.
- The academy sponsor, through the appointment of the Executive Principal, has ensured that the academy has robust monitoring and the access to a wide range of additional expertise from her outstanding school.
- The academy sponsor plans to establish a management board to maintain the pace of change and increase the level of challenge, so further strengthening the good quality leadership and management.
- The academy meets current safeguarding requirements. All adults are trained regularly with regard to child protection issues.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to the success of the academy and are now fully aware of the school's performance compared to others. They have ensured that the academy meets its statutory responsibilities concerning safeguarding. In partnership with the Executive Principal and sponsor, they are now able to hold the academy to account for the achievement of students, including those in receipt of additional funding. They recognise the academy's key strengths and weaknesses. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of teaching across the academy and understand the systems for managing staff performance.

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

Unique reference number	138439
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	446359

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor -led
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	749
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	194 (dual registered)
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Bailey (Acting)
Executive Principal	Jane Herriman
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01908 624720
Fax number	01908 624777
Email address	enquiries@shlacademy.org

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