

All Saints Academy Dunstable

Houghton Road, Dunstable, LU5 5AB

Inspection dates 8–9 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Sixth form provision		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Achievement in 2014 was inadequate across many subjects. Current progress is not rapid enough to address low levels of attainment.
- The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged students and their peers nationally is not closing rapidly enough.
- The sixth form is inadequate. Achievement is low. Although progress is accelerating, it is not rapid enough for the school to meet the national minimum standards for attainment.
- Leadership and management require improvement. Systems in place in 2014 failed to identify underachievement and inaccurate assessment and to hold staff to account for the progress of their students. New systems track students' progress more closely, but have not yet impacted on students' achievement.
- Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are not ambitious enough. They do not use information on students' progress well in their planning. Activities are insufficiently matched to the prior attainment of learners. Students thus become disheartened or bored, and standards of behaviour deteriorate.
- Marking and assessment often lack advice on how students can progress further. Students are therefore unsure how to improve their work.
- Students' behaviour requires improvement because the academy's policies are not consistently followed by all members of staff, and this is slowing the development of an academic culture across the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Changes to leadership and governance have added ambition and expertise; leaders have made significant improvements to the curriculum, assessment and to teaching and learning.
- The headteacher and governors have made difficult decisions that are improving the quality of teaching. As a result, the amount of teaching that is inadequate is reducing.
- Students feel safe. The academy's work to help them assess online threats and other risks to their personal safety is effective.
- The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good, and is developed well through a wide range of opportunities in lessons and external speakers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students' learning in 46 lessons, including four jointly with senior staff.
- Inspectors met with governors, staff, students and representatives of the co-sponsors.
- Inspectors observed the students at work in class and at informal times, such as before school and during break and lunchtime.
- The inspection team considered 37 responses to Parent View, the online survey for parents provided by Ofsted, together with one telephone call from a parent.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation including leaders' evaluation of the academy's performance, the academy improvement plan, information relating to the quality of teaching, data on students' attainment and progress, academy policies and procedures, governing body minutes, and the academy's arrangements for safeguarding.
- Inspectors analysed 68 questionnaires completed by members of staff.
- Inspectors attended an assembly and observed the work of several tutor groups.

Inspection team

Anthony Sharpe, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Lucas

Her Majesty's Inspector

Richard Spencer

Seconded Inspector

Natasha Campbell

Additional Inspector

Matthew Sammy

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- This academy is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It converted from an upper school to an 11-18 school in 2013.
- The school became an academy in 2009, and is co-sponsored by the University of Bedfordshire and the Diocese of St Albans.
- The proportion of disabled students or those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of students for whom the academy receives the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The very large majority of students are White British.
- The academy does not use alternative provision for its students.
- The academy does not meet the current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement for all students in the academy by:
 - providing more ambitious and challenging work for students
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information well to design activities which build on the prior knowledge, skills and understanding of their students
 - making sure that feedback clearly guides students on how to revise their work, and that teachers build in opportunities in lessons for this to take place
 - further developing the current work to share the best practice in teaching across the school.
- Ensure that all staff apply the academy's policies on behaviour with consistency.
- Improve the leadership and management of the academy by:
 - holding teachers and leaders to account for the performance of their students with greater rigour
 - tracking the progress of different groups of students more accurately, in order to deal with underperformance effectively.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Progress slowed significantly in 2014 compared with previous years, and leaders at all levels have recognised the need to act decisively and with urgency. The appointment of senior leaders, who have the necessary expertise and drive to address the decline in academic standards and attitudes to learning, is quickly reducing the amount of inadequate teaching and has improved the accuracy of coursework assessment and students' behaviour. There is now strong achievement in the creative arts and in physical education, and the most effective teachers are modelling good practice across the school.
- Academy leaders have put in place a new approach to the curriculum which meets the needs of students more closely in order to accelerate the raising of achievement. Other recent improvements have made the tracking of students' progress more secure. Senior leaders now monitor the quality of teacher assessment more effectively.
- Middle leadership has been strengthened by appointments since 2014 that focus on academic progress, and by appropriate training that raises the expectations of middle leaders and allows them to be familiar with good practice in other schools. They are now driving forward improvements in teaching and learning. Programmes of support have focused on the needs of individual students, and the assessment of coursework is now checked rigorously and its accuracy confirmed by outside agencies.
- Academy leaders have identified that the structure of the school day hinders progress and is not appropriate for the learning needs of students. They have now addressed this, and the full impact of the change is likely to be seen in the new academic year.
- New leadership has led to better use of the funding made available to improve the progress of disadvantaged students. Transition meetings with primary schools identify students early and academy leaders then allocate resources that are closely matched to individual needs. Leaders monitor the attendance of this group of students rigorously, and monitor academic progress effectively through close examination of students' work. The attainment of disadvantaged students has doubled, and is on track to rise further.
- Academy leaders are making better use of the funding which supports those students who join Year 7 with lower levels of literacy and numeracy. Leaders identify students' needs as they enter the academy and deploy specialist staff in nurture and withdrawal groups. There are clear signs that this support is helping to raise standards in literacy and numeracy for these students.
- Students receive good careers advice and guidance in Years 7 to 11. A well-planned programme focuses on the attributes and skills of students in the younger year groups, and builds on this with older students through activities that focus on aspects such as interview technique and writing curriculum vitae. Students have a good understanding of how their interests and personal qualities can be used in further education and employment.
- The academy ensures that provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good through a programme of assemblies and visiting speakers, and through a wide range of opportunities in lessons. For example, students explore different cultures in food technology lessons, ethical issues in religious education, and experience Islamic art and African music. As a result, students are well prepared for life in modern Britain, and can clearly articulate their understanding of democracy, tolerance and the rule of law.
- Good relations and equal opportunities are promoted well by the staff; discrimination is rare and dealt with effectively. Although students' behaviour requires improvement, incidents relating to issues such as homophobic bullying are rare.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements. Key leaders and managers are trained regularly, and recruitment procedures are secure. External agencies are involved appropriately, and records of referrals are clear and comprehensive.

- The co-sponsors of the academy have used their expertise and resources to assess the academy's work and how it might be improved. They have strengthened the governing body through the addition of new governors with the relevant knowledge and skills, and used external expertise to review the work of leaders at all levels. The accuracy of assessment and the tracking of students' progress have improved significantly as a result.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have recognised the inadequate levels of achievement in 2014 and have appointed governors and senior managers with the appropriate expertise to hold leaders to account. They now know the academy's data in depth, and understand the strengths and weaknesses in teaching across the curriculum. Governors now scrutinise the work of middle leaders at first hand, using their detailed knowledge of the academy and external expertise to check the accuracy of reports from leaders at all levels.
 - The governing body performs its statutory duties effectively, and monitors safeguarding and the arrangements for the management of teachers' performance in detail. Teachers and leaders have objectives that match the priorities for academy improvement. Governors ensure that salary progression is dependent on successful outcomes for students, and are challenging school leaders to address any underperformance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Inspectors found that incidents of low-level disruption were common where teaching was less effective. Staff and students report that behaviour is not good enough because staff fail to apply the academy's policy on behaviour consistently. They also report that there are clear signs of improvement.
- Conduct outside of lessons also requires improvement. While students socialise well with each other, they do not always move between classes in an orderly fashion. Academy leaders have recognised this issue and reorganised the structure of the school day from September in order to improve this aspect of behaviour.
- Fixed-term exclusions were four times the national average in 2014. The academy has increased the pastoral support for students at risk of exclusion and consequently the number of exclusions has halved this year, and has continued to fall in recent months.
- Students take good care of the facilities. Litter is rarely seen, and there was little evidence of graffiti observed during the inspection.
- Most students are punctual and wear the correct uniform. Leaders have appropriately supported and challenged parents on these issues, with a subsequent improvement in both across the academy.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement because recent improvements to overall attendance have stalled this year. The academy's leaders lack detailed information on the absence rates of specific groups of students, and this limits the impact of their efforts to increase attendance.
- Incidents of homophobic and racist bullying are rare. Students feel safe and expressed confidence to inspectors that the academy responds well to any reports of bullying.
- The large majority of parents and staff consider that safety is a positive feature of the academy, and inspectors agree.
- Staff work hard to make sure that students are safe when using the internet and social networking sites.

Students therefore feel confident about their learning in this area, and can calculate personal risk effectively.

- The academy provides opportunities for students to discuss social issues and the contribution of young people to society through assemblies, tutorials, and days when the timetable is suspended. As a result, students have a growing understanding of the risks relating to gang culture, substance misuse and other threats to personal safety.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- The quality of teaching is inadequate because many teachers have low expectations of what their students can achieve, and this leads to unambitious teaching in some classes. These low expectations are being challenged by senior and middle leaders, but this challenge is too recent to show the necessary impact.
- Many teachers do not make good use of the information they hold on their students' needs and previous learning to plan activities which match students' specific requirements. Consequently, some students are bored by undemanding work, while others are disheartened by work that is too difficult for them. The academy's leaders have improved the accuracy and frequency of assessment data, but inspectors saw insufficient evidence of teachers using it to accelerate the progress of specific groups, such as disadvantaged students.
- Marking and assessment are frequent and regular, but often lack advice on the next steps that students need to take in order to progress further. In many cases the comments from teachers are limited to acknowledgement or praise. Where comments are more diagnostic, there is little evidence that teachers' advice has led to revised work, and sometimes students repeat the same mistakes. Target grades are often lost when exercise books are completed and replaced, and consequently students are unclear on whether they are making progress.
- The impact of teaching on standards of literacy, reading and numeracy is variable but improving. The academy's leaders have identified low levels of literacy for many students on entry through baseline assessments, and have created extra classes and nurture groups to address this issue. The impact of these recent changes is not yet widespread. However, the library successfully supports the academy's focus on ensuring that students read more widely and more often, and students demonstrate good oral skills in many subjects. Inspectors saw good examples of students manipulating mathematical data in relevant subjects across the curriculum, such as in a Year 12 business studies lesson where students were asked to evaluate a successful marketing campaign.
- Teaching assistants support disabled students and those who have special educational needs effectively across the curriculum. They ensure that students become increasingly self-sufficient in their studies, through the use of open questions which encourage students to think for themselves.
- Students make rapid gains in their learning where teachers match work well to their needs. In a Year 9 lesson in music, the teacher's assessment gave clear guidance to students on how to improve, and appropriate resources were given to students on the basis of that assessment. These students made outstanding progress in the development of their compositional skills.

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- The academy has changed from an upper school to a secondary school, and the prior attainment of students who join the academy in Year 7 is in line with the national average. Students entering the academy in Year 9 do so with attainment significantly below that of their peers nationally.
- Students leave with attainment that is also significantly below average. The proportion gaining five or

more GCSE qualifications, including English and mathematics at grade C or above, is declining over time and dropped significantly in 2014.

- Overall progress fell significantly in 2014. This fall was due to insufficient progress in English, science, modern foreign languages and humanities. All sizeable groups of students showed significantly slower progress than their peers nationally, except the most-able students.
- Academy leaders recognise that attainment and progress remain low in Key Stage 4. Attainment continues to be low, and is not rising quickly enough, despite the increasing prior attainment of younger year groups.
- Progress in science is in decline and is variable in different classes in English and mathematics. Progress is currently most rapid in the creative arts and physical education. Inspectors also found evidence of more rapid progress in modern foreign languages.
- Although the progress of the most able was in line with expectations in 2014, many teachers and leaders have failed to react to the admission of more able students and the subsequent low expectations in the classroom are starting to slow the progress of this group of students. Middle leaders have made changes to make progress more rapid, but these have yet to show impact.
- The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged students and other students nationally is very wide, and that this gap is not narrowing quickly enough. The attainment of disadvantaged students in English was more than a grade lower than their other students nationally in 2014, and almost two grades lower in mathematics. The gaps with their peers in school were slightly smaller, at just below a grade in English, and a grade-and-a-half in mathematics, because of the overall drop in attainment in the academy. Although new staff appointed to address this issue are having an immediate impact on current progress, the gap in attainment remains considerable.
- The achievement of some groups, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs was significantly below their peers in 2014. Current data are showing improved attainment over time for this small group of students.
- The academy does not enter students early for GCSE qualifications.

The sixth form provision is inadequate

- Attainment in the sixth form was significantly below average in 2014, and failed to meet the current national minimum standards.
- Progress in the sixth form has been significantly below average for the last three years. Although inspectors found improved progress in the achievement of the students currently taking courses in the academy, it has not accelerated quickly enough to close the gap to the national minimum standards. Achievement is therefore inadequate.
- The leadership of the sixth form is inadequate. Leaders and managers are not tracking the progress of sixth form students effectively. Although periodic checks are made on whether the attainment of individual students is rising, there is insufficient evaluation of overall progress.
- Until recently, the curriculum was not appropriate for the students who join the sixth form. Their low prior attainment has left them ill-equipped for the courses that they start, and only the most resilient remain until the end of Year 13. The academy's leaders have recognised this, and introduced new courses. Despite this, the range of suitable courses remains too narrow.
- The quality of teaching remains variable across the sixth form curriculum and is inadequate overall. Although the quality of teaching has improved in subjects that showed lower than expected progress in

2014, current achievement remains too low.

- Sixth-form students behave well and feel safe. Assemblies on relevant topics such as online safety are tailored to sixth form needs and experiences, and are developed further by tutors.
- Students value the pastoral support that the academy provides, and this underpins their positive attitudes to their studies. They value the visits and events that the academy arranges for them. In turn, they contribute to the work of the academy and act as prefects, and appreciate the responsibility this brings.
- The proportion of sixth form students applying for higher education courses is increasing because of the academy's effective work to promote these academic opportunities, particularly for White British boys, who had not considered this option in the past.

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	135946
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	464642

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	830
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Wallace
Principal	Tom Waterworth
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2013
Telephone number	01582 619700
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