

Sir John Lemman High School

Ringsfield Road, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 9PG

Inspection dates

12–13 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has improved significantly since the last inspection. Successful actions by leaders have led to improved results at key stage 4. These are now above the national average in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The positive relationships between pupils and teachers are a distinctive feature of this school. Pupils' conduct around school and behaviour in lessons are exemplary, which enables pupils to make good progress.
- Leaders have created a highly aspirational culture. The broad and balanced curriculum combines with an impressive range of extra-curricular activities to raise achievement. Pupils are prepared exceptionally well for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Bullying is rare. Pupils know that if they have any concerns or worries that staff will respond quickly. Leaders monitor vulnerable pupils closely.
- Parents have exceptionally high opinions of the school. The vast majority of parents say that their children are happy, safe and well behaved.
- Pupils' overall attendance is above average because they enjoy school. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance has improved rapidly but is still lower than that of other pupils nationally.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Very helpful information, advice and guidance are leading to an improvement in sixth-form students' progress. Students' attendance is average.
- Leaders ensure that pupils read regularly at school, but the whole school's literacy strategy is not as effective as it could be in improving pupils' communication skills.
- Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to plan learning that matches the needs of different groups of pupils. Some teachers do not always check pupils' understanding before moving on, so some pupils make slower progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving, but does not match that of other pupils nationally because teachers' expectations are not high enough.
- Leaders have ensured that almost all teachers consistently follow the school's feedback policy. In some subjects, pupils are not acting on this feedback and this slows progress.
- Governors are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, the school's priorities for improvement are not clear to all leaders and staff. This slows further improvement.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that pupils achieve exceptionally well by ensuring that teachers:
 - check pupils' understanding in lessons before moving on to new tasks
 - provide all pupils with opportunities to reflect on their work so that they understand where they have made mistakes and how to improve.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that leaders:
 - agree clear priorities for improvement which are known and understood by all
 - meticulously evaluate the impact of their actions to improve the achievement and attendance of groups of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, to match those of other pupils nationally
 - improve literacy across the curriculum, so that pupils' communication skills are of a consistently high standard.
- Improve sixth-form provision by setting aspirational targets for attendance and closely monitoring students' progress towards them.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- School leaders' consistently high expectations have created a culture in which pupils' conduct, safety and tolerance of diversity are exemplary. Leaders' high ambitions for pupils have established an aspirational ethos that is improving achievement in a wide range of subjects. However, the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils do not match those of other pupils nationally and this is a priority for leaders, if Sir John Lemman High School is to become an outstanding school.
- School leaders have high expectations for the standards of teaching, learning and assessment and rigorously monitor all aspects of teachers' work to ensure these are met. In joint observations with inspectors, leaders were accurate in their evaluation of teaching. Teacher underperformance is challenged through effective human resource management procedures and the governors' determination to provide only the best teaching for the pupils. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning has improved.
- New and inexperienced teachers feel well supported by their mentors and professional tutor. Teachers engage fully in an extensive and well-chosen training programme that improves their practice effectively.
- Senior leaders have developed an effective assessment system and set aspirational targets, which are known and understood by pupils. This has led to a culture in which pupils are motivated to do well and as a result, outcomes are now above national averages.
- Parents who responded to the online questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. Typical comments included, 'a well-managed school which shows care and leadership to the pupils and engages with them positively to prepare them for the effort and work needed to ensure a successful future'. The inspection team also identified these strengths at the school.
- Subject leaders have a good understanding of the school's performance management system and use it well to support and challenge their staff. Leaders' management of performance takes into account a wide range of evidence to ensure that any pay progression is linked to pupils' performance.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders offer a wide range of GCSEs and extra-curricular activities including sports, creative arts, homework clubs and revision classes. This enables pupils of different abilities to achieve well. Pupils explore moral decisions in religious education lessons. An extensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum prepares pupils very well for life in modern Britain. For example, all pupils participated in a mock European Union referendum and experienced the democratic process.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, have a challenging range of enrichment courses to follow including additional mathematics, Latin, maths challenge and GCSE psychology. These programmes challenge pupils academically and develop their resilience when learning unfamiliar topics.

- The leadership of the sixth form is a strength of the school. Leaders have provided an inclusive curriculum that offers progression routes for pupils of different abilities. This is leading to improving student attendance and retention in the sixth form.
- School leaders have used additional government funding effectively to improve the progress of pupils who arrive in Year 7 below the expected level for literacy and numeracy. As a result, pupils catch up with their peers quickly due to the effective interventions that the school provides. However, leaders are aware that while the progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved, their progress is not in line with that of other pupils nationally. This is because leaders are not evaluating the impact of their actions in enough detail, and as a result, underachievement is not always identified in a timely manner.
- Governors actively encourage strong links with the local authority and other multi-academy trusts. The school has provided leadership capacity to other schools and supported them to improve pupils' outcomes. This partnership work has led to improvements in senior leadership skills at the school.
- Although all staff subscribe to the school's mission of 'achievement for all', there is inconsistency between governors, school leaders and staff as to which priorities for change will have the greatest impact on pupils' outcomes. This slows the rate of improvement towards leaders' aim of the school becoming an outstanding school.
- Leadership of the provision for the most able pupils is not yet effective because school leaders have not developed the evaluation skills needed to judge the impact of this work on pupils' outcomes.

Governance of the school

- The governing body's experience and skills have been strengthened since the last inspection. The governing body now includes more business leaders and successful educationalists, who bring a range of skills that benefit the school in areas such as human resources and the leadership of multi-academy trusts.
- Governors have recently led the school's decision to join the Waveney Valley Academies Trust and have put in place effective transitional arrangements to prepare the school for its imminent conversion.
- The governing body reviews all policies regularly to ensure that they are up to date, compliant with statutory requirements and accessible to all stakeholders through the school's website.
- Governors have a strong understanding of the standards of teaching, learning and assessment in the school because the quality assurance procedures in place give them confidence in school leaders' evaluations. For example, the headteacher jointly observes lessons with other leaders to validate their judgements.
- Governors receive regular information about pupils' achievements, and challenge school leaders, particularly around key stage 4 outcomes. However, governors are not as robust in their evaluation of key stage 5 information.

- The governors' and the new headteacher's identification and communication of the school's priorities for improvement are inconsistent. This leads to a lack of clarity for staff and limits the depth of evaluation leaders undertake to assess the impact on pupils' outcomes. For example, the individual strategies the school provides to support disadvantaged pupils are not evaluated.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders and pastoral staff have extensive training in safeguarding and rightly prioritise pupils' welfare. Leaders have created a safeguarding culture that is watchful and nourished by carefully monitored training and updates for all staff and pupils. This has ensured that all pupils feel safe and have the utmost confidence in their teachers to solve problems rapidly.
- School leaders keep parents well informed about how to promote the safety of their children. This enhances the safeguarding culture at the school. For example, 176 parents and their children attended an online safety day held at the school, and some pupils are being trained as online digital ambassadors.
- Governors ensure that recruitment procedures are robust. Staff and governors are well trained in child protection, safe recruitment practices and anti-radicalisation procedures. A trained governor is present at all interviews for staff appointments. Leaders maintain comprehensive and detailed records of the recruitment checks they undertake. The deputy headteacher regularly checks that the records meet all statutory requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection. The school's regular evaluations of teaching and learning show that the proportion of good or better teaching has increased. This is due to leaders' rigorous quality assurance systems and the support provided to teachers who need it. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across and within subjects remain a barrier to the school becoming outstanding.
- Teachers skilfully plan interesting learning that pupils enjoy, so punctuality to lessons is very good and low-level disruption is unusual. Teachers manage behaviour well using set procedures to prevent minor disruptions from escalating.
- Teachers know the individual needs of different groups of pupils, such as those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, due to the effective use of software that provides them with detailed pupil information. This enables teachers to plan learning to meet the needs of groups of pupils.
- Where teaching is best, for example in English, business studies and Spanish, the learning activities match the needs of all groups of learners and progress is accelerated. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have access to a laptop in English lessons to assist with their extended writing.

- The most able pupils, including the disadvantaged most able pupils, make good progress because teachers plan well-designed tasks to stretch and challenge them. In science, the most able pupils were set an additional task in their feedback, which they found challenging and responded to successfully.
- The quality of teachers' use of the school's feedback policy has improved since the last inspection in some subjects. In subjects where it is well established, such as in design technology, pupils receive regular diagnostic comments about their work and what they need to improve. In some other subjects, the frequency of feedback does not meet the expectations of the school's marking policy.
- Pupils' understanding and response to their teachers' feedback are inconsistent across subjects and year groups. Some teachers do not consistently apply the school's designated improvement and reflection time (DIRT) strategy to ensure that all pupils have the confidence and skills to respond to feedback and improve their learning.
- Pupils read regularly at school. The development of literacy across all subjects lacks consistency and leaders are not evaluating its impact on pupils' learning. As a result, pupils' fluency and comprehension in reading and oral communications are not as fully developed as they could be.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The personal characteristics and aspirations that pupils develop through the curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities help secure their good academic achievements. Pupils are caring, mature and proud ambassadors of the school.
- Pupils receive high-quality, impartial careers advice. Leaders deploy academic mentors to guide disadvantaged pupils through decisions about their next steps in education and to support them in achieving their personal goals.
- Pupils understand how to stay safe online and at the school. They have great confidence in the school's systems to prevent bullying and discrimination. The personal, social, health and economic curriculum includes topics such as drug awareness, healthy choices and the full range of British values. Pupils talk confidently about how to make healthy choices in their lives.
- Leaders have developed a Year 6 into Year 7 transition programme that includes summer school, Saturday events and close communication with parents. The attention given to pupils' individual needs on transfer to the school helps to overcome any barriers to success.
- Leaders carefully monitor pupils who attend other providers for some of their learning. Leaders share information about pupils' progress, attendance and attitudes to learning with parents and concerns are raised at an early stage. Pupils achieve well.
- School leaders have ensured that the environment is a safe one in which to learn. The open front entrance to the school is risk assessed and there are regular staff patrols and CCTV cameras to monitor its security.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils demonstrate the school's culture of respect and tolerance through their daily actions. Pupils are extremely smart in their uniforms, move around the site with excellent levels of conduct and are polite and welcoming to visitors.
- Pupils respond very well to school leaders' high expectations of behaviour. Pupils respect the whole school environment. There is no litter or graffiti. Pupils enjoy eating in the delightful dining room because it is welcoming, and has tablecloths and flowers.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is excellent because they respond well to their teachers' high expectations and skill in intervening quickly to correct behaviour. As a result, detentions and referrals to the school's internal exclusion unit have fallen. Fixed-term exclusions remain significantly below the national average. Permanent exclusions have fallen significantly since the last inspection.
- Leaders' actions have improved pupils' attendance overall to be above average, including for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance has improved rapidly to be slightly below that of other pupils nationally.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Overall achievement has improved since the previous inspection. Analysis of the 2016 provisional outcomes indicates that the pupils performed well in the government's new performance accountability measure, called 'Progress 8'.
- In 2016, almost two thirds of pupils achieved at least a grade C in both GCSE English and mathematics. From their below-average starting points, this represents outstanding progress in English and good progress in mathematics. This is due to the good quality of teaching, learning and assessment in those subjects.
- Pupils of all abilities made good progress, according to the unvalidated key stage 4 results for 2016. The most able pupils increased the proportion of A* and A grades they achieved in English and science subjects. This was due to teachers knowing the examination specifications well and planning learning that stretched pupils' understanding.
- Inspection evidence, including work seen in pupils' books, indicates that pupils across almost all year groups, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making at least good progress.
- Pupils' progress in most year groups is good. At key stage 3, progress in the vast majority of subjects is good. Pupils' progress in French and religious education in Year 10 and history, geography and computing in Year 11 is below leaders' expectations. School leaders are aware of these subjects and have plans for improvement. However, it is too early to judge the full impact of these plans.
- Pupils who completed Year 11 in 2016 nearly all progressed to the school's sixth form, further education or work-related training programmes. The proportion of pupils not in education, employment or training is below the national average.

- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving, but they do not make the same progress as other pupils nationally in mathematics or across eight subjects. This is because expectations are not high enough and the impact of interventions is not evaluated.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Sixth-form provision overall has improved since the last inspection. Leaders have an in-depth understanding of the strengths and areas for development and hold subject leaders to account in 'subject focus meetings' for their performance. This has led to increased student progress in 2016, with almost all subjects being broadly in line with national averages.
- Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. In most lessons, teachers plan learning well to meet the prior attainment of students and use questioning expertly to both check students' understanding and stretch the most able students.
- Pupils enter the sixth form with below-average key stage 4 outcomes and achieve GCE A-level and BTEC results that are broadly in line with national averages. This represents good progress.
- Students' progress is in line with national averages in all GCE A-level subjects. Where teaching and learning are strongest, students make above-average progress, for example in business studies, media studies and applied science.
- Teachers' planning of learning for the most able students is effective and has increased the proportion of students achieving A* to B grades at GCE A level to be good in 2016.
- Leaders have ensured that sixth-form courses meet requirements well. For example, the small numbers of students who have not yet achieved at least a grade C in GCSE English or mathematics make good progress.
- Leaders provide a strong programme of careers information, advice and guidance. Students value the university visits and find talks by ex-students who share their experiences motivational. Students all receive impartial careers advice from an external provider. The proportions of students attending university are increasing rapidly.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning. They attend lessons punctually and display levels of conduct that make them good role models for younger students. Sixth-form students engage in a range of leadership opportunities, including those as sport leaders, subject support mentors and school council members.
- Leaders have ensured that students in the sixth form know how to stay safe. Interesting tutorials and assemblies on topics such as sexual health, drug awareness, personal finance and respect and tolerance of minority groups help students to be well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders and managers of the sixth form have been effective in ensuring that most students are enrolled on appropriate courses. The curriculum offers a good range of academic and vocational courses. Leaders provide enrichment lessons that students opt for, such as recreational sport, Latin or the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. The retention rate from Year 12 to Year 13 has improved but is still below the national average. Leaders have rightly identified this as an area for improvement.

- Leaders monitor absence and follow up all students who are away from school to ensure that they are safe. However, leaders do not set aspirational attendance targets for sixth-form students. As a result, their attendance is only average.

School details

Unique reference number	137055
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10019632

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,381
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Chapman
Headteacher	Michael Taylor
Telephone number	01502 713223
Website	www.sjlhs.suffolk.sch.uk
Email address	reception@sirjohnleman.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 October 2011

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Sir John Lemman is larger than the average-sized secondary school and converted to become an academy before the last inspection in October 2011.
- Since the last inspection, the school has been part of the ongoing reorganisation of education in Suffolk, and now educates pupils aged from 11 to 18 years.

- Most pupils are White British. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is average.
- A small group of pupils attend off-site training at Lowestoft College or Nexus Engineering for work-related study programmes or The Attic for a personal development curriculum.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of key stage 4 and the sixth form.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 35 lessons, five of which were seen jointly with a senior leader. In addition, several short visits were made to a range of lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior, subject and other leaders, three groups of pupils and a group of sixth-form students, and the chair and three other members of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at the 135 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspection team observed the school’s work, scrutinised data about pupils’ and students’ achievement, behaviour and attendance, and looked at the school’s self-evaluation and improvement plans. In addition, inspectors reviewed minutes of meetings of the governing body and scrutinised pupils’ and students’ work in lessons.

Inspection team

Simon Webb, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
John Daniell	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Jonathan Culpin	Ofsted Inspector
Judith Wakeling	Ofsted Inspector
David Piercy	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Asker	Ofsted Inspector

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