

The Littlehampton Academy

Fitzalan Road, Littlehampton, West Sussex BN17 6FE

Inspection dates

24–25 April 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' actions over time have not led to sufficient improvement. Although standards are beginning to rise, pupils do not achieve as well as they should by the end of Year 11.
- Governors and the trust have not been sufficiently swift or effective in challenging leaders to improve the school quickly. They recognise that the pace of improvement since the last inspection has been too slow.
- The quality of teaching is too variable across the school. In some subjects, such as science and design technology, pupils experience too many changes of teacher. This has impeded pupils' rates of progress over time.
- Key stage 4 pupils are not on track to achieve as well as they should by the end of Year 11. They have too many gaps in their knowledge and understanding.
- Where teaching is less effective, pupils do not routinely behave as well as they should. This affects their learning and that of others.
- Leaders' investment in staff training and development has not had enough impact on the quality of teaching across the school. Despite leaders' best efforts, ongoing staffing turbulence has hampered the pace of improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have developed the curriculum effectively to ensure it is suitably broad and builds on pupils' learning over time. Learning in lessons is supported well by a rich range of extra-curricular clubs and activities that help pupils to prepare well for their next steps.
- Leaders, governors and the trust are determined to raise standards further. Although the pace of improvements in the school has been too variable since the last inspection, it is now accelerating. Parents' confidence in leaders' effectiveness is increasing gradually.
- Provision for students in the sixth form is good. Students are typically taught well and make good progress as a result. Their post-16 experience prepares them well for their next steps.
- Leaders provide effectively for pupils whose learning or behaviour needs make them vulnerable. Consequently, these pupils attend increasingly well and make good progress. Pupils attending the Scott Centre and Compass Centre are supported very well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school becomes consistently good by:
 - recruiting and retaining suitably high-quality staff in areas where pupils are currently experiencing too much change and variability
 - building on recent training and development for teachers, so that the effective practice evident in the school becomes more widespread.
- Accelerate rates of progress for pupils currently in key stage 4, so that they achieve as well as they can by the end of Year 11.
- Embed and sustain recent improvements, particularly in teaching and leadership, so that leaders' credible plans for improvement lead to standards rising more quickly than in the past.

An external review into the effectiveness of governance is currently taking place across the trust. A further review of governance is therefore not recommended.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- At the time of the previous inspection, the current principal had not been permanently appointed to his post. The rapid pace of improvement emerging at that time has not been sustained throughout the last two years. Consequently, although recent signs of development are encouraging, teaching and standards have not improved substantially over time.
- The principal works determinedly with governors and the trust to overcome a number of barriers that are impeding the rate of school improvement. He has taken decisive action to restructure the school in order to improve the effectiveness of leadership and manage budgetary challenges. Ongoing difficulties around staff recruitment and managing structural changes have contributed to the impact of this action on standards in the school being slow to emerge.
- Staff share the principal's clear vision for their school and work hard to realise it. Teachers value the helpful focus on their professional development and share an understanding of what effective teaching looks like. In faculties where staffing has been more stable, the impact of training on the quality of teaching and learning is more evident than in areas where there are notable proportions of temporary staff.
- Recently introduced directors of faculty play an important role in driving school improvement. They understand the priorities for development in their faculties and are suitably empowered and skilled to tackle them. They recognise how communication and accountability have increased since the last inspection and can demonstrate where their work is leading to incremental improvements. Useful support and training from the trust is starting to help directors of faculty to hone their leadership skills further.
- The focus on supporting disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able, is evident throughout the school. The trust's school improvement lead provides useful support and challenge to leaders about how well this group of pupils is doing. Staff know these pupils well and recognise the barriers to their learning. As a result of clearly focused support work, disadvantaged pupils' attainment and progress are improving over time. However, they do not currently achieve as well as they should.
- Leaders make effective use of additional funding to support pupils who arrive at the school with weak literacy and numeracy skills. Reading, in particular, is actively promoted. As a result of useful extra help, pupils make rapid gains in reading and spelling, which help them to access the wider curriculum more successfully than in the past.
- Pupils with additional needs are typically supported well. Leaders make effective use of funding to plan appropriate provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and for those who join the school speaking English as an additional language. Useful systems support staff in accessing relevant information about pupils' specific needs, although a very small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns during the inspection about how well their children's needs are met.
- The Woodard Academies Trust knows the school well and is aware of its vulnerabilities.

The trust recognises that its capacity to support school improvement strategically has been limited in the past. The school improvement lead, who began working with the school in November 2017, helps the trust to provide a greater sense of urgency and challenge to leaders than was previously the case. However, the trust acknowledges that there is further work to do to accelerate the pace of improvement. Opportunities to support effective leadership via useful trust-wide training are emerging and developing.

- The vast majority of pupils are proud and fiercely protective of their school, despite their frustrations about aspects they recognise as not being good enough. They have confidence in their principal and value the commitment of staff who are there long term and doing their best to make things better. Students in the sixth form, in particular, describe notable improvements to the school since they joined it.
- Leaders have responded thoughtfully to national changes to curriculum requirements at both key stages 3 and 4. They demonstrate a clear focus on ensuring that pupils have every opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills and understanding that will prepare them well for the future. Leaders' creative approach to tackling areas where staff recruitment is an issue, such as in science and design and technology, is supporting improvement in these areas, but there is further work to do in this respect.
- The pupils' taught curriculum is enhanced suitably by a range of additional opportunities. They can participate in a variety of extra-curricular clubs, encompassing topics such as sports, the arts, creative writing, films, languages and computer gaming. While pupils spoken to during the inspection valued the opportunity to have these experiences, a notable proportion of the small number who responded to the pupil questionnaire said that they rarely participated in an after-school club.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. A carefully planned personal development programme covers a range of appropriate topics, such as self-awareness, well-being, community, enterprise and politics, which are reinforced through assembly time. Pupils value the opportunity to develop their wider understanding of the world, particularly through community events supported by the chaplaincy. Most feel that their school is an inclusive place, where differences are accepted.

Governance of the school

- Since the last inspection, there has been notable turbulence in the composition of the academy council, which fulfils the role of a local governing body. Councillors recognise that this has reduced the impact of their work, because their collective inexperience has meant that some issues have been missed or tackled with insufficient urgency.
- The academy council continues to demonstrate absolute commitment to raising standards in the school. Councillors do not make excuses for past underperformance and recognise the need to improve pupils' outcomes urgently, particularly at key stage 4, by making teaching consistently good. Minutes of recent academy council meetings show how challenge to leaders about underperformance has increased and how councillors' scrutiny has been enhanced by more accurate information from leaders.
- Academy councillors bring a suitable range of skills and experience to their role. Regular reflection about the council's effectiveness, led by the chairman, is helpful in

identifying where work has needed to be strengthened, such as around teaching, learning and assessment. New council members are recruited strategically to enhance areas of relative weakness, which supports improvements in the impact of the council's work.

- Councillors understand their safeguarding responsibilities and use appropriate training to ensure that their knowledge is up to date. They check safeguarding arrangements routinely, and are confident these are fit for purpose. However, they recognise that a deeper understanding of how the school is required to record staff recruitment checks would enable them to be more vigilant in monitoring this aspect of leaders' work.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders are suitably vigilant in their checks on adults working or volunteering in the school. Their records are appropriately detailed and enable them to be as confident as they can be that pupils are not at risk from the adults that work with them. The school's central record of recruitment checks contained some administrative errors at the start of the inspection. These errors were rectified promptly by school leaders.
- Staff receive regular and appropriate training about their safeguarding responsibilities. Consequently, they are able to act confidently in the best interests of pupils they consider may be vulnerable. Staff understand the clear procedures in place for reporting any concerns they have about a pupil and are suitably aware of local issues that they need to be particularly vigilant about.
- Leaders provide high levels of support for potentially vulnerable pupils, including those who are at risk of becoming lost from education through exclusion. Staff work increasingly closely with families and external support to reduce risks associated with these pupils. Leaders recognise that relationships with some parents are fragile.
- Pupils benefit from useful opportunities to learn about issues that impact on their personal safety. They understand what to do if they have concerns and are mostly confident that these will be addressed. Pupils value the school chaplain's work in this respect.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently effective across the school. As a result, not enough teaching is leading to pupils making good progress over time across their range of subjects.
- Pupils' books often show sporadic work or gaps in learning. This is, in part, because of the notable instances where pupils have had a number of teachers in a subject area over a relatively short period of time. This fluctuation impedes how effectively teachers use long-term planning to build precisely on pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Presently, around 15% of teachers are temporary members of staff, which contributes to the erratic rates of pupils' progress. In some instances, this reflects leaders sensibly taking time to ensure that the new staff they recruit are appropriately skilled to meet their expectations. Nevertheless, this has adversely affected the quality of teaching

pupils have experienced over time. The school now has a much lower proportion of temporary staff than in the past, and recent recruitment suggests it is even better placed to achieve greater consistency in the academic year ahead.

- Where teaching is less effective or staffing is more turbulent, pupils' behaviours for learning are much less well established. In these instances, pupils do not routinely demonstrate the motivation to work hard or to learn from each other and their teachers. Consequently, too much chatter and silly behaviour prevails. A notable minority of pupils and parents expressed their frustrations about how this impedes learning.
- In the most successful areas of the school, there are established working routines that enable pupils to learn well. Teachers have high expectations for what pupils can do, and plan suitably challenging work, including for the most able, that builds in learning over time.
- All staff have a shared understanding of the school's current focus on improving the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils, who have underperformed notably in the past. Leaders' established approaches to keeping a careful eye on how well these pupils are doing, and to challenge and support them appropriately, was evident through lesson visits and looking at pupils' work. As a result of the focused work in this area, disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving over time.
- When leaders redesigned the curriculum, they thought carefully about the assessment that sits alongside it. Long-term plans identify appropriate and suitably challenging next steps in learning, which teachers use to plan lessons and check how well pupils are doing. This information is shared transparently with parents and pupils in real time, so that they always have a way of knowing what they need to do to improve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The personal development curriculum teaches pupils to manage risk appropriately and keep themselves safe. Pupils know what to do if they have concerns about their own safety or welfare, or that of another pupil. Most pupils feel that any issues they raise are dealt with sensitively and effectively, although a very small number described less positive experiences in this regard, and a minority of parents expressed similar views.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision, both within and beyond the school, are well cared for. Staff understand pupils' specific needs and vulnerabilities and seek to accommodate them, so that pupils are nurtured but also expected to attend and achieve well. Leaders make sensible decisions about what best meets the needs of pupils who struggle, either academically or socially, to manage provision in the main school. They keep in regular contact with Chichester College to check that pupils attending there are safe and responding well to support.
- The Scott Centre provides highly effective care and support for the pupils who attend it. Leaders ensure that pupils' time is carefully balanced between working in the centre and integrating into the main school. This helps pupils to develop their social skills,

while retaining a safe haven to retreat to when needed where they can access additional help that meets their specific needs. Pupils in the Scott Centre follow a suitably broad and balanced specialist curriculum that helps them to prepare well for the future.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils typically conduct themselves well around the school site. They are generally courteous, if sometimes overly exuberant, during social times, with staff providing a visible presence around the site. A very small number of pupils expressed concerns about feeling vulnerable when particularly boisterous behaviour takes place on the busy staircases between lessons or at lunchtimes.
- Leaders have taken sensible steps to review provision for pupils who demonstrate challenging behaviour. The Compass Centre, an in-house facility, provides useful support for pupils at risk of exclusion, which reduces the likelihood of them becoming lost from education. This is helping to reduce instances of poor behaviour and associated exclusions within mainstream lessons.
- Pupils typically attend school regularly. Absence rates are routinely around the national average, although disadvantaged pupils attend less regularly. Those pupils who are supported by alternative provision, either in the Compass Centre or at Chichester College, show notable improvements in their attendance as a result.
- Leaders act rigorously to pursue persistently absent pupils, adopting a reasonable and layered approach. Consequently, the proportion of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, who are persistently absent has reduced notably over the past year.
- The proportion of pupils receiving a fixed-term exclusion is well below national figures. The percentage of pupils being given a period of internal isolation is reducing over time. This results from leaders' strategic approach to tackling more persistently challenging behaviour, linked to a new behaviour policy and the introduction of the Compass Centre. Permanent exclusions are above national figures, but are used appropriately, with careful scrutiny from the academy council, the trust and the local authority.
- During the inspection, the standards of behaviour observed in lessons were closely linked to the quality of pupils' learning experiences. Where expectations were high, rules were routinely applied and teaching met pupils' needs, classrooms were orderly and the environment was conducive to learning. Where the behaviour policy was used less consistently, or learning did not stimulate pupils' interest, standards were seen to be lower, because pupils were less engaged in their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over time, pupils' outcomes by the end of Year 11 have been too low. Pupils typically

do not make the progress they are capable of and achieve below other pupils nationally. In 2017, progress by the end of key stage 4 was identified as being below the government's floor standard.

- Pupils currently in Year 11 have made limited progress so far from their typically average key-stage-2 starting points. However, their recent progress is more rapid, as a result of effective extra help that has been put in place. For example, just over half of the pupils who are receiving additional support in English or mathematics have improved by at least a grade over the past few months. This is double the difference this extra help made at the same time last year. Pupils' progress by the end of Year 11 is likely to remain below average.
- In other year groups, progress is increasingly rapid and secure, particularly in key stage 3. Year 10 pupils are doing better than their Year 11 predecessors, but the legacy of their underachievement at key stage 3 still exists. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils typically make good progress over time, including in subjects such as science, where outcomes have been much weaker in the past. However, some fluctuations remain between subjects in the proportion of pupils securely on track towards GCSE success.
- Leaders' focused work is leading to disadvantaged pupils achieving increasingly well. Although they do not routinely do as well as other pupils nationally, the differences in their attainment and progress are diminishing over time. In lessons and when looking at pupils' work, inspectors often found no discernible differences in the standards achieved by disadvantaged pupils when compared with their non-disadvantaged peers.
- A notable proportion of pupils who join the school after the start of Year 7 speak English as an additional language. Leaders provide careful and effective support to these pupils, which helps them to access the wider curriculum. As a result, pupils who speak English as an additional language typically make good progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress as a result. The proportion who are achieving below expectations at key stage 3 is reducing over time. In Years 7, 8 and 9, approximately a fifth of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are exceeding expectations across their range of subjects.
- Pupils supported in the Scott Centre and the Compass Centre typically make expected rates of progress from their starting points, across a suitably broad curriculum. Pupils who attend alternative provision at Chichester College are generally successful in acquiring GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics, as well as other relevant level 1 qualifications.
- Leaders review information about pupils' performance regularly and carefully, checking to ensure that it is valid. Where underperformance is identified at any particular assessment point, the action taken in faculties leads to progress accelerating.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders' effective actions have sustained the quality of provision in the sixth form since

the last inspection. They are suitably ambitious for the future of post-16 provision in the school. They have credible plans to increase the relatively low numbers of students currently opting to continue their studies at the school at the end of key stage 4.

- Leaders match study programmes closely to students' needs, interests and ability. As a result, the curriculum that students follow is suitably broad and appropriately aspirational. Most students follow academic courses, but vocational options are put in place where appropriate. Leaders' plans for the future development of the curriculum look likely to meet students' needs even more closely than in the past, providing, in particular, for those who may not have realised their potential by the end of key stage 4.
- Teaching is typically as good as the strongest practice seen across the rest of the school. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to structure lessons that build successfully on students' learning over time. Their skilful questioning holds students' attention and encourages them to link different aspects of their learning together. Students take responsibility for their own learning and respond well to the support they receive. This enables them to learn well and make secure progress over time.
- In 2017, students who completed A-level courses made good progress from their starting points, particularly those who had high prior attainment. In comparison, the progress of the small number of students completing vocational qualifications was below average. Currently, progress in vocational subjects is much more rapid across both Years 12 and 13. While attainment in A-level courses has dipped slightly mid-year, disadvantaged and most-able students continue to achieve well.
- Students who join the sixth form needing to improve their GCSE English and mathematics outcomes receive effective support. Students, a number of whom are disadvantaged, typically make above-average progress and improve on the grades they achieve at the end of Year 11. This trend is set to continue for students currently in the sixth form.
- Attendance figures for students in the sixth form are below average and lower than for the rest of the school. This in part reflects leaders' commendable efforts to retain and support vulnerable students who might otherwise not remain in education. However, leaders remain committed to improving attendance, so that they know students are safe and benefiting from a quality learning experience. Leaders are creative in their approaches to encourage students to come to school regularly.
- Students are highly positive about their post-16 study experience. Leaders invest in strong pastoral support that uses limited resources well to bring out the best in students. Useful impartial careers information and guidance helps them to plan appropriately for their next steps. Impressive numbers of students are successful in their university applications, and the proportion continuing to education, employment and training at the end of the sixth form is well above the national average.

School details

Unique reference number	135745
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10046551

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 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1402
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	128
Appropriate authority	Woodard Academies Trust
Chair	Mrs Patricia Pritchard
Principal	Mr Morgan Thomas
Telephone number	01903 711 120
Website	http://www.tla.woodard.co.uk/
Email address	office@tla.Woodard.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 March 2016

Information about this school

- The Littlehampton Academy (TLA) is a large, mixed school with a small sixth form. It became a sponsored academy in September 2009 and is part of the Woodard Academies Trust. In line with the trust's ethos, the school describes itself as a Christian-designated academy.
- Almost all pupils are of White British or other White background. A broadly average proportion of pupils is considered to speak English as an additional language.
- Just over a quarter of pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which is in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils who are entitled to support for a special educational need, including those who have an education, health and care plan, is also

broadly typical.

- The Scott Centre, a resource base which accommodates 15 pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder, is based on the school site. Admission to the Scott Centre is overseen by the local authority, with TLA staff managing the service it provides. All pupils in the Scott Centre have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The Compass Centre provides additional support for pupils in managing their behaviour. This resource is run by, and specifically for, pupils who attend TLA.
- A small number of key stage 4 pupils attend full-time alternative provision at Chichester College.
- The acting principal who was in post at the time of the last inspection was appointed permanently to his post in April 2016. At that point, the executive headteacher post, which was being undertaken by the trust's chief executive officer, ceased to exist.
- The trust delegates responsibility for governance to a local academy council. The majority of academy councillors were not in post at the time of the last inspection.
- In 2017, the school did not meet the government's floor standards for what pupils are expected to achieve by the end of Year 11.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2015 to 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 61 lessons, a small number jointly with school leaders. They attended one assembly and went to four tutor-group sessions.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentary evidence provided by leaders and available on the school website. This included the school’s self-evaluation and academy improvement plan, various policies, curriculum information, safeguarding documentation, behaviour and attendance records, and information about pupils’ current performance.
- Meetings were held with various groups of senior and middle leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the academy council and the Woodard Academies Trust.
- One inspector spoke to a representative from Chichester College regarding the pupils who attend alternative provision there. Inspectors also carried out visits to the Scott Centre and the Compass Centre.
- Inspectors worked alongside middle leaders to review a sample of work from pupils in Years 8 and 10, and students in Year 12. They also looked at pupils’ work during their visits to lessons.
- Inspectors took into account 141 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, including 84 free-text comments. The lead inspector spoke to two parents on the telephone, and considered two emails received during the inspection. Inspectors also reviewed survey responses from 42 pupils and 107 members of staff.

Inspection team

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Keith Pailthorpe	Ofsted Inspector
Ross Macdonald	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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