

The John Warner School

Stanstead Road, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire EN11 0QF

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2019

| Overall effectiveness | Requires improvement |
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| 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 | Requires improvement |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have been slow to adapt to the changing context of the school.
- Leaders are not quick enough to address areas where pupils underachieve. This is partly due to assessments not being precise enough.
- Teaching varies too widely. Too many pupils, predominantly the most able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make less progress than they should.
- The current curriculum model at key stage 4 is not best suited to pupils' needs.
- Pupils' progress by the end of key stage 4 in modern foreign languages and humanities was significantly below average last year.
- Historically, students in the sixth form have not made the progress they should have. Last year, their achievement was well below average.
- Leaders do not monitor the impact of support for pupils with SEND closely enough.
- While behaviour is overwhelmingly good, there are a very small number of pupils whose behaviour disrupts the learning of others.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and governors know the school well. Their 2022 vision is founded upon long-term, sustainable improvements.
- Leaders are introducing a new curriculum model that builds knowledge and understanding progressively over time.
- Because of leaders' actions, boys now make better progress. The difference between girls' and boys' achievement is diminishing.
- Where teaching and learning are most effective, particularly in English and mathematics, pupils achieve well.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for.
- The headteacher and executive headteacher have clear and credible plans in place for improvement, although some are very new.
- The Hub meets a small number of pupils' complex needs extremely well by addressing the underlying reasons behind their presented behaviours.
- Leaders use additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils particularly effectively.
- The new behaviour policy has led to a significant reduction in fixed-term exclusions.
- Parents are supportive of the school. They appreciate the work of staff to help pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - eradicating weak teaching, particularly in modern foreign languages
 - sharing the good practice seen in departments, including English and mathematics, more widely.
- Raise achievement by:
 - making sure that teachers plan work that matches what pupils, particularly most-able pupils, know and can do
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Improve progress in the sixth form by:
 - making sure that teaching and learning focuses less on task-based work and more on developing students' deeper understanding of key concepts and principles.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that assessment systems give leaders across the school, including governors and trustees, a clearer understanding of the progress that pupils make from their starting points
 - making sure that leaders have a clear line of sight where responsibilities lie for areas of improvement, including the support for pupils with SEND, and evaluate their impact precisely
 - implementing plans for improving assessment processes and the key stage 4 curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school has grown over recent years. However, leaders have not responded quickly enough to some of the changes in either examination specifications or pupils' different needs. As a result, standards across the school have declined since the previous section 5 inspection.
- The headteacher, in post substantively since September, appreciates the need to move away from reactive management. His philosophy and vision are about long-term improvements built on solid foundations. He recognises that quick wins are not sustainable over time and do not allow pupils to make the progress across all areas of the curriculum that they should.
- Leaders' ability to bring about necessary improvements are sometimes hampered through imprecise assessment information. Leaders do not always have a clear picture of what needs to be done in good time to prevent subjects or groups of pupils from underachieving. For example, while last year's outcomes at key stage 4 overall were broadly in line with the national average, results in humanities, modern foreign languages, for most-able pupils and the sixth form were all significantly below average.
- Leaders' work to rectify the shortcomings identified in the previous section 8 inspection is bearing fruit. Their effective actions have seen a significant decrease in fixed-term exclusions, disadvantaged pupils' progress has improved, and the difference in progress between boys and girls is reducing.
- The broad curriculum gives pupils ample opportunities to study a wide range of options. In the past, a higher proportion of pupils were guided to study modern foreign languages. Leaders are now reviewing this approach and tailoring the choice of subjects more closely to pupils' needs.
- In collaboration with primary feeder schools, leaders are working on a joint Year 5 to Year 8 curriculum. This will be focused more sharply on knowledge acquisition, development of analysis and evaluation skills, and greater exploration of key principles.
- Pupils are highly appreciative of the wide range of extra-curricular activities available to them. They spoke enthusiastically about the robotics club, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, dance, music, drama, visits in this country, trips abroad, and the wide range of sporting activities. Leaders' commitment to ensuring that pupils receive a well-rounded education is also reflected in the thoughtful and wide-ranging promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- While leaders monitor teaching, learning and assessment regularly, the impact of this in raising standards in some departments is too slow. There is strong practice around the school, consistently seen in English and mathematics. However, while internal 'quality partners' identify best practice, this is not shared sufficiently well to improve provision elsewhere.
- The effectiveness of middle leaders varies too widely. Leaders in English and mathematics are reflective, evaluative and have a proven track record of securing tangible improvements in their subject areas. In other departments, often where

staffing changes are more frequent, leaders are still getting to grips with how to raise standards effectively.

- Leaders are determined to provide a comprehensive and broad post-16 curriculum to serve the needs of their local community. Year 11 pupils want to stay at the school to continue their education. In the past, this has meant that some of them undertook courses that did not meet their needs. Because of this their progress was not good. Last year, students' progress was well below average. However, leaders have convincing and credible plans in place to bring about much-needed improvements.
- Leaders use the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils well. Staff are committed to helping pupils overcome any barriers to learning. Their useful support enables pupils to progress well both socially and academically. Leaders keep a clear oversight of the impact of their spending through weekly discussions between pupils and heads of upper and lower school.
- Pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is developed well by leaders. In almost all lessons, pupils discuss issues maturely and listen to the views of others carefully. Pupils embody the values of tolerance and respect.
- Leaders do not have a sufficiently tight overview of the progress of pupils with SEND. Different people monitor and are responsible for different aspects of their progress. There means that there is no coherent picture of how well they do overall.
- Leaders use the catch-up funding effectively. Pupils who need additional support to catch up receive additional literacy and numeracy support rather than studying a second modern foreign language. Around 230 pupils, across year groups, also benefit from additional small-group interventions before school, during lessons and at lunchtime. This is helping pupils to make better progress, especially in their reading.

Governance of the school

- The trust oversees the school's budget. The chief financial officer ensures that spending is managed carefully so the school is financially secure and future expenditure is controlled well.
- Governors' efforts to improve standards are sometimes limited owing to the information they receive not being accurate. For instance, minutes from the October 2018 meeting refer to improved A-level results whereas results had dipped markedly.
- Governors have a range of valuable skills and desirable experience. Their minutes show that they both challenge and support leaders. They have overseen improvements in behaviour, disadvantaged pupils' progress, provision for pupils with complex needs, and a narrowing of the progress difference between boys and girls. Different governors hold responsibility for different areas and through regular visits, meetings and checks they monitor the school's effectiveness well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have made sure the school has comprehensive systems to help keep pupils safe. All staff spoken with during the inspection were aware of the school's

safeguarding processes. Staff are confident to report concerns and are conscious of the importance of noting even the smallest of details about pupils. They know that these are all part of a jigsaw leading to a complete picture of each pupil's welfare.

- The school's electronic system for monitoring concerns helps ensure that records are detailed and staff follow-up issues quickly and efficiently. Leaders work closely and effectively with wider agencies to meet vulnerable pupils' needs well.
- Leaders are aware of local issues and have a range of visitors in assemblies to highlight to pupils some of the risks to their safety. Recent talks have alerted pupils to the dangers of gang violence and knife crime.
- The school shares use of the sports centre with members of the general public at times. Leaders have appropriate risk assessments in place so that pupils remain safe.
- The single central record is compliant and lists all the necessary pre-employment checks undertaken on staff to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teachers' assessment to gauge pupils' progress and adapt learning is inconsistent. Pupils of all abilities often complete the same activities, which results in too little being demanded of the most able pupils. In other lessons, pupils are often presented with too much information to process and there is a lack of clarity about the key learning points. As a result, the progress of current pupils over time is still too low in some subject areas, most notably modern foreign languages.
- The support that pupils with SEND receive is not consistently good. In some classes, pupils receive help and guidance that supports them well towards meeting their individual goals. In other classes, often where there is a higher proportion of pupils who need help, the support is not linked precisely enough to their needs. In these lessons, teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are too low and pupils' progress over time does not match that of their peers.
- Pupils confirm that they learn more where learning is more focused, and this is too dependent on the subject, and often the teacher. Some pupils do not experience continuity of teaching in some subject areas. This hampers their progress.
- Staff across all subject areas are aware of the needs to improve boys' progress relative to girls. Improvements have been seen. However, inspection evidence shows that there is still a noticeable difference. The school's own assessment information indicates that for key stage 4 pupils the difference is still about half grade.
- Where practice over time is most effective, teachers develop strong relationships with pupils. Behaviour is good because teachers plan work that interests pupils and makes them think. In these lessons, teachers routinely check that everyone understands, and they adapt learning skilfully to ensure that any misconceptions are addressed.
- In English, pupils are focused on learning because teachers' high expectations are translated into them setting work that builds on what pupils know and can do. Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that pupils develop their understanding of key concepts, subject vocabulary and literary techniques well.
- In mathematics, there is a consistent approach where pupils are set work that is

sufficiently challenging for them. Often, there are different tasks available to meet pupils' needs. Pupils say this helps them learn well. Teachers use a variety of approaches to check pupils understand the work, including whiteboards, and adapt learning if any have difficulties. Expectations are high, and learning is well sequenced and becomes progressively more difficult.

- Inspectors noted effective practice in other areas such as lifelong learning, dance, music, post-16 French, physical education, humanities and science.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders and staff know there are a small number of pupils whose behaviour can potentially disrupt the learning of others. Leaders have set up 'The Hub', a resource to support pupils by looking at the underlying reasons behind their presented behaviours and helping them to learn how to be successful in their learning. The support provided for pupils who attend 'The Hub', who often have complex needs, is excellent and is transforming their outlook on life.
- Pupils spoken with during the inspection say that they feel safe and are taught how to stay safe. They explained how they are given strategies in tutor time, assemblies and lifelong learning to mitigate potential risks to their safety. Topics recently covered include drug use, e-safety, gangs, knife crime and social media.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying is very rare and dealt with well on the few occasions it does happen. A very small number of respondents to Ofsted's official surveys cited instances where, in their view, bullying had not been dealt with effectively. Staff logs of any bullying concerns are thorough and include resolution and periodic follow-ups.
- Staff make regular and frequent checks on pupils who attend alternative provision. Pupils with a variety of different needs are supported well to access and re-engage in education. They acquire useful skills, including construction and motor vehicle repairs, alongside more formal academic qualifications. Pupils' attendance improves, and they make good progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The high number of fixed-term exclusions was highlighted as an area of focus in the previous short inspection in January 2018. Leaders introduced a new behaviour policy founded upon higher expectations and clearer processes for managing behaviour. This has significantly reduced the number of fixed-term exclusions by effectively nipping poor behaviour in the bud.
- Pupils typically behave well in lessons. The overwhelming majority listen intently, concentrate on their learning and work hard. Most staff agree, although a small number feel that this is not the case. Leaders have set up 'The Hub' to support pupils with complex needs more effectively.

- Pupils attend well. Leaders have put in effective processes to improve attendance and these are paying dividends. The overall attendance figure has improved from last year and is now in line with the national figure for similar schools, as is disadvantaged pupils' attendance. Pupils' persistent absence is broadly in line with national figures. However, it is showing a slight increasing trend over a three-year period.
- Pupils conduct themselves well about the school. They are polite, sociable and respectful. At lunch and breaktime, they queue patiently for food and talk sensibly with friends. The large number of pupils using the small canteen area without any behaviour issues is particularly impressive.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Historically, overall pupils' progress has been broadly in line with the national average. However, there have been some key groups or subjects where performance has been significantly below average. Last year, these included humanities, modern foreign languages and most-able pupils across many subject areas.
- Leaders' own information shows that current pupils' progress is stronger across all key stages. Evidence gained during the inspection partially supports these claims. For example, there have been improvements in humanities and pupils' progress is climbing. However, there are still inherent weaknesses in modern foreign languages and most-able pupils are still not challenged across all subjects sufficiently well.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving steadily. The additional funding is spent well and is making a real difference for these pupils. Their progress from different starting points shows no discernible difference to their peers and is moving towards that of other pupils nationally.
- The progress of pupils with SEND is too variable and depends too much on the subject or the class. Leaders' approach to monitoring how well they do needs to be more coherent to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they should.
- Leaders have created an environment where pupils are actively encouraged to read widely and often. The library is calm, neat and well stocked with a range of books that pupils enjoy reading. It opens before school and is frequently full of pupils quietly reading. The librarian monitors closely what pupils read in terms of quantity and level. One pupil was extremely pleased to see that she had read 'four million words' since September.
- Pupils receive constructive guidance on option subjects to help them make informed decisions about what they would like to study. Information, advice and guidance processes are well-considered across all key stages. A good blend of days off-timetable with structured activities, external visitors, work experience and learning for life lessons ensures that pupils are well prepared to decide their next steps. The school is well on track to meet the government careers strategy benchmarks by the 2020 deadline.
- Boys have not achieved as well as girls over time. Leaders made this a key focus area following the previous inspection in January 2018. The difference in progress measures narrowed markedly last year. However, there is still a difference and leaders know that this is still a key priority.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- There is too much variability in the quality of teaching and learning across subjects. Where practice over time is less strong, teachers' planning is more about getting students to complete activities than developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. Where this is the case, students do not grasp the underlying principles of learning and do not make good progress over time.
- Leaders have been slow to put right some of the weaker areas in the post-16 provision. However, they now have measures in place that are well thought through. Timetabling in post-16 has been given greater focus, some courses are no longer offered, and new systems are in place for setting target grades. These are helping leaders to monitor students' progress more closely and are already showing some impact.
- Many teachers who now mark papers for the examination boards have developed greater expertise in the revised specifications. In turn, staff provide students with more clarity about what is required in their work. Added to more stringent testing based upon the full repertoire of examined elements, this gives leaders' projections more credence.
- While historically students have not made the progress they should, last year's results still show a marked decline. In 2018, students' outcomes for academic and vocational courses were significantly below the national average. However, the school's projected figures indicate that current students will do much better next year.
- Students' attitudes in the sixth form are very positive. They work hard, listen carefully, ask probing questions and discuss issues articulately. However, too much time in some lessons is spent on task-based learning that fails to deepen students' understanding well enough.
- Students learn most where teachers make good use of their strong subject knowledge to provide learning activities that are well matched to students' needs. Some teachers' expert questioning, as seen in a Year 12 further mathematics lesson, pushes students to think more analytically about their work. Students in history, physical education/sports studies and mathematics attained better than in other areas last year.
- Sixth-form students are well looked after. They are very positive about the level of support they receive, both socially and academically. Sixth-form staff are highly effective in meeting students' pastoral needs and have created a friendly and welcoming environment.
- The advice and guidance that students receive is useful and pertinent. It helps a greater proportion than is seen nationally progress into sustained education, employment or training. Leaders provide well-judged support to students looking for a range of options, including apprenticeships and application to prestigious universities.
- Leaders deliver the wider elements of the 16 to 19 programmes of study well. The work-related learning and enrichment opportunities help students to develop wider skills and an increased cultural awareness. Sixth-form students say that they are well supported and retention figures are in line with national average. The small numbers of students who retake their English and mathematics GCSEs do well, with pass rates significantly above national averages.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 136607 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10053253 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| 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 | 1,318 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 220 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Fiona Ives (governors and trustees) |
| Headteacher | Jeremy Scott |
| Telephone number | 01992 462889 |
| Website | www.johnwarner.herts.sch.uk |
| Email address | head@johnwarner.herts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 29–30 January 2014 |

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized secondary school and has grown over recent years.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be entitled to the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
- A few pupils are educated in off-site alternative provision at the Rivers Education Support Centre.

- The school converted to academy status in April 2011. The school, along with two other local primaries, formed the Hoddesdon School Trust in September 2016.
- Trustees have delegated responsibilities for overseeing the quality of education and safeguarding to the local governing body. Accountability remains with the trust.
- One of the co-headteachers at the time of the last section 8 inspection is now the substantive headteacher. The other is the executive headteacher and chief financial officer of the trust.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed pupils' learning in 66 lessons and carried out three learning walks across subjects and key stages. Some observations were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team. A tour of the school was made with the headteacher and inspectors independently checked the quality of teaching and the behaviour of pupils in lessons. Observations of pupils' behaviour in the dining halls at breaktimes were made, as were observations of pupils around the site. The internal support centre, 'The Hub', was visited and checked.
- The inspection team looked carefully at the quality of work in pupils' books to assess progress and teaching over time.
- The inspection team considered the 100 responses to the online parental questionnaire, Parent View, together with 95 written responses, the 70 responses to the pupil questionnaire and the 71 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team met with the chair of the governing body, two other governors, the headteacher, the executive headteacher, who is also the chief financial officer of the trust, senior leaders, a group of middle leaders, pastoral leaders, other staff and five different groups of pupils. Inspectors observed a wide range of school activities, including assembly and form time.
- The inspection team analysed and scrutinised the school's self-evaluation documentation, which included evidence from governors' minutes, school policies and progress information.
- Inspectors examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils in the school.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| John Randall, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Liz Smith | Ofsted Inspector |
| Duncan Ramsey | Ofsted Inspector |
| Paul Lawrence | Ofsted Inspector |
| Carole Herman | 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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