

Samuel Ward Academy

Chalkstone Way, Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 0LD

Inspection dates

6–7 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders, managers and governors have failed to maintain the high standards reported at the previous inspection.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in 2018 were broadly in line with attainment and progress of other pupils nationally. Within that overall picture, higher-attaining pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils did not do well enough.
- Leaders have not used additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils well.
- Pupils' behaviour is too variable. It is improving, but low-level disruption interrupts learning in too many lessons. Raising the expectations of teachers and pupils around behaviour and conduct is a work in progress.
- The current leadership team has been in place for just a few months. The work of new leaders is beginning to have an impact, but it is too soon to have fully addressed the school's weaknesses. Leaders have acted with urgency to improve the curriculum.
- While there have been some notable individual successes, students' progress in the sixth form over the last two years has been weak.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment and especially planning is too variable. After a very large number of teachers left the school, leaders worked hard to ensure that there are sufficient specialist staff to teach the curriculum. This has largely, but not yet entirely, been successful.
- Pupils have a weak understanding of British values and the risks of extremism.

The school has the following strengths

- Following a period of turbulence in staffing and frequent leadership changes, current senior and middle leaders are ambitious for their pupils, enthusiastic and committed. They have a vision to return the school to the highly regarded and successful institution it once was, improving the life chances of young people in Haverhill. They know what needs to be done and are doing it.
- Leaders have successfully reversed the decline in the sixth form. The sixth form is growing. Given its size, it offers a good range of subjects. The previous fall in students' achievement has been halted. The sixth form is a happy and friendly place, where students enjoy their studies and value their teachers.
- Leaders' actions and training approaches are improving the quality of teaching.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes to ensure that pupils in key stage 4 and students in the sixth form more often reach the outcomes they should, by:
 - ensuring that the best practice in teaching and learning is found more consistently across year groups and subjects
 - ensuring that teachers use the assessment information they have more consistently to update expectations of what pupils can do and plan learning tasks that meet these expectations.
- Improve behaviour, by:
 - re-enforcing consistent expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct
 - engendering in pupils a greater hunger for learning
 - planning lessons that match the needs and abilities of pupils.
- Build on current work to promote fundamental British values to ensure that pupils have the knowledge and skills to understand and challenge extremism.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The combination of recent staff changes and frequent changes of headteacher has left the school in a fragile state.
- Until 18 months ago, the multi-academy trust (MAT) was failing to check the performance of the school or hold leaders accountable for the achievement of pupils. This has been addressed by the current leadership of the MAT. They have carried out thorough internal reviews and commissioned external reviews to check the appropriateness of leaders' actions. The leaders of the MAT have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The spending of pupil premium money to support disadvantaged pupils is now appropriate. This is a very recent innovation resulting from the work of newly appointed senior leaders. Until recently, leaders failed to keep a tight enough control on the school's use of this funding. They are still unable to account for the spending of catch-up funding for pupils who arrive in Year 7 with low attainment in English and mathematics.
- The new leadership team is tackling the considerable challenges facing the school with determination and enthusiasm. Middle leaders are enthusiastic and effective role models of teaching. The newness of leadership together with the urgency of tackling fundamental weaknesses in managing the school resulted in inspectors having difficulty in gaining information about how leaders monitored the effectiveness of the school's work over time. Too often, the information did not exist. The leadership of SEND, however, is a strength.
- The current headteacher has been in post for only four months. He has prioritised improvements, starting with the curriculum. Pupils now have the time intended by the national curriculum to follow subjects at key stage 3. Pupils making option choices at key stage 4 this year have greater choice and more freedom to take subjects they enjoy. The impact of these improvements will take time to be seen in pupils' outcomes.
- Another priority for the new headteacher has been to improve relationships with parents and the local community. A small majority of parents now believe that the school is well led and managed and around two-thirds would recommend it.
- The school plans the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values through the curriculum and in tutor time known as 'meeting time' activities. The impact on pupils is not as great as leaders hope. For example, although all staff have received training on the government's anti-extremism 'Prevent' duty, pupils have limited knowledge of, or understanding of, British values or the danger of extremism.
- Effective work to improve the quality of teaching is more established. Replacing over 30 teachers who left last year and inducting their replacements has provided a challenge to leaders' ability to improve teaching. Last year, a coaching programme had demonstrable success in transforming the practice of some teachers. Financial pressures have led to the number of lead practitioners being reduced this year. This is leading to greater clarity in leaders' minimum expectations of teaching and

empowering middle leaders to enforce it.

- Training for teachers is tightly focused on the school's priorities. Based on much more robust performance management, teachers choose between work to improve outcomes for higher-attaining pupils, pupils with SEND or disadvantaged pupils.
- Morale among staff is now high. Staff spoke to inspectors about how well supported they feel this year. In the staff survey conducted by the school during the inspection, most staff strongly agreed that they are proud to work at the school. The overwhelming majority agree that the school is well led and managed and that leaders take account of workload.

Governance of the school

- Governance is now effective, but there remains a legacy from previous poor governance.
- Members of the local governing body now have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Together with trustees of the MAT, governors have acted to change staffing and leadership.
- Governors check safeguarding arrangements. They visit the school regularly and question the leaders with whom they are linked.
- There is a history of governors not holding senior leaders to account. For example, in autumn 2018 governors recorded that the pupil premium funding had not been accounted for some time. Although there is major improvement, leaders are still not collecting all the information that is needed for governors to hold leaders fully to account.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders give safeguarding a very high priority. They know their pupils well.
- External reviews of safeguarding recognise the effectiveness of the school's actions. Referrals to outside agencies are followed up, sometimes involving a lot of effort on the part of staff.
- Pupils feel safe and the very large majority of parents responding to Parent View agree that pupils are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All inspectors observed variation in teaching quality within subjects and within year groups. There is very good practice, but some poor practice.
- The legacy of staff absence and long-term supply cover has had a negative impact over time on the continuity of pupils' learning. The inability to replace some teachers or cover the absence of others has resulted in a shortage of specialist subject teaching in

some lessons.

- Typical of the least successful teaching in the school are low expectations of what pupils can achieve, acceptance of poor presentation and poorly organised work, low levels of challenge for middle and higher attainers, basic superficial work, limited opportunities for extended writing, and pupils selecting the easier challenges to do. Here, teachers do not always challenge pupils' use of derogatory language or stereotypes.
- Too often, teachers do not check pupils' understanding or address misconceptions. Too often, teachers do not use the information they have on pupils well enough to plan challenging learning.
- Staff use the school's assessment policy quite consistently. The school's latest policy on feedback is not understood by all key stage 4 pupils.
- The proportion of effective teaching is rising. Its leadership is strong and training for teachers is focused on either subject expertise or the school's priorities. Where teaching is strong this is usually down to the inherent strengths of the individual teacher.
- This stronger teaching is typified by effective behaviour management creating a positive working environment with productive relationships between the teacher and pupils. These teachers plan activities that contribute to learning over time. Their secure subject knowledge gives confidence to their pupils. Where appropriate, especially in key stage 4, they refer to examination requirements and use effective questioning to build pupils' understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- One of the key aims of the school is the development of 'responsible citizens'. Leaders plan for the promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and Britishness through the curriculum. This is not effective enough. Pupils are aware of the school's values, but unfamiliar with 'British values' such as democracy, tolerance, respect and the rule of law. They have a weak understanding of the dangers of extremism. Consequently, they are not well enough prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils' welfare is given a very high priority. There is a strong focus on promoting their physical and mental health. However, pupils are not sufficiently aware of local threats to their well-being such as those associated with illegal drugs and, for example, the signs of involvement in drug gangs known as 'county lines'.
- Pupils take insufficient pride in their work. This is often the product of teachers' low expectations of presentation.
- Pupils feel safe in school, but in crowded areas, such as the canteen and corridors, pupils can feel intimidated. Leaders have identified pupils' conduct as an urgent area for development over the remaining weeks of the spring term.

- The school's work to support young carers is a strength. Assigned members of staff have responsibility for understanding and addressing young carers' needs. They raise awareness by sharing knowledge about disability, illness and young carers throughout the school. Young carers are listened to, consulted with and given time and space to talk to internal and external staff. The work recently led to a local authority award.
- Careers provision is being stepped up and now enjoys a more central role than has been the case in the past. The leader of this area is committed to the work and gives additional time to enable pupils to attend relevant events. There has been effective support for current Year 9 pupils in making their option choices. However, until recently, despite the commitment of direct responsibility for careers advice, guidance and support, there has been insufficient priority given to this area. As a result, pupils' experience is patchy.
- Useful work with local employers has led to some pupils taking up apprenticeships but work to promote such opportunities has tended to be targeted at individuals or groups rather than promoted to all. As a result, Year 12 students currently have limited knowledge of the range of post-18 opportunities available. Work with the local authority has been successful at ensuring that the number of Year 11 leavers not in education, employment or training (NEET) is very low.
- Leaders check the progress, welfare and attendance of the very small number of pupils educated off site.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Behaviour is improving, but there is low-level disruption in too many lessons. The majority of parents agree that behaviour is good, but over a quarter say it is not.
- Bullying, including computer-based bullying, has reduced. Pupils, and the majority of parents expressing an opinion, believe that instances are dealt with well. There is an effective pastoral support team.
- Faced with so many urgent issues to tackle over the last year, leaders have not done enough to record and evaluate patterns of behaviour. For example, although leaders now maintain appropriate records, inspectors were unable to locate information on racist incidents over time.
- One of the reasons that behaviour is improving is that the new headteacher has introduced a new behaviour policy with a better balance of reward and sanction. Pupils and staff are positive about this. Expectations of acceptable behaviour have increased. As a result, the number of fixed-term exclusions and repeat exclusions has increased.
- Attendance is above average and has improved over the last year. No groups are disadvantaged by non-attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The progress of pupils between the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 for the last two

years has been broadly average and this continues to be the case for current pupils. However, this big picture masks the poor performance of particular groups. Leaders have identified these groups, specifically disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and high-attaining pupils. The progress of these groups is central to the school's training for teachers. Currently, provision for these groups is mixed in quality and dependent on how well each teacher plans for their needs. The progress of these pupils lowers the school's overall average and so outcomes are not yet good.

- Overall, the progress of pupils in English is low when compared to mathematics. New leadership in English is driving improvement. Pupils make a good start in English and are strong readers. The quality of teaching in English is too mixed for pupils to make consistently strong progress. Many pupils enjoy mathematics and make better progress than in English.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils in English and in mathematics is lower than that of other pupils. For example, disadvantaged pupils' attainment overall has been half a grade lower than that of other pupils for the last two years.
- Pupils attain GCSE results that are broadly average. Within that, pupils attained poorly in some subjects. This is partly due to the way the curriculum has forced pupils into subjects that they do not enjoy at key stage 4. The new headteacher moved swiftly to change the option system this year to increase the opportunities for pupils to choose subjects in which they are likely to become successful. However, this was too late for current key stage 4 pupils who were already following constrained choices and so the impact of recent changes will not be seen in published results for at least two years.
- Staff work well with targeted pupils in partnership with the local authority and especially those at risk of becoming NEET, to ensure that pupils proceed to appropriate next steps in their education. As a result, the number of NEET pupils is extremely low.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The sixth form has undergone a period of significant turbulence caused by staffing changes and a lack of clear leadership over time. Leaders have recognised that to maintain post-16 provision and improve the overall quality, the profile of the sixth form in the local area needs to be higher.
- The newly appointed leader is inexperienced in post-16 provision but has a clear vision for the sixth form and is aware of the improvements needed. Improvements during her short time in charge are evident, such as rapidly building sixth form numbers. The sixth form offers a suitable range of 16 to 19 study programmes based on a range of A-Level courses and some vocational level 3 awards. This also includes resit courses in GCSE English and mathematics.
- Attendance is not as high as it should be. The school's arrangements for home study mean that attendance is currently low.
- The quality of teaching and the impact this has on pupils' learning and progress varies widely. Current progress information clearly shows where the strengths and weaknesses lie. Leaders' analysis of this information is helping them to plan their actions to target those students who are underachieving and in danger of missing their target grades.

- In most lessons, working relationships between staff and students are excellent. Students feel well-supported by their teachers. For example, students spoke very positively about a Year 12 A-level history lesson seen by an inspector. In this lesson the teacher's strong subject knowledge gave confidence to students, who in turn used evidence to build an argument around just how much Stalin's Soviet Union displayed the characteristics of a totalitarian state by 1932. The lesson engrossed the students and the inspector.
- Outcomes achieved in 2018 were broadly average overall, albeit with small cohorts. Outcomes achieved by students on A-Level courses were better than they were in vocational awards. Current information shows that this pattern continues. For the small numbers taking GCSE results in English and mathematics, students' progress was above average in English and below average in mathematics.
- Students recognise and praise the improvements made since last year, where gaps in staffing led to some discontinuity in learning. They feel things have stabilised. As a result, they are making improved progress.

School details

Unique reference number	136322
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10085480

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	1,281
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	120
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chief Executive	Tim Coulson
Headteacher	Andrew Hunter
Telephone number	01440 761511
Website	http://www.samuelward.co.uk
Email address	swa@samuelward.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 October 2012

Information about this school

- The Samuel Ward Academy converted to become an academy in November 2010. After this the school became the lead school in an MAT. The MAT has become a partnership of 22 schools and renamed the Unity Schools Partnership.
- This is an above-average-sized secondary school. It has a small sixth form.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils entitled to the pupil premium is below average.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students with SEND is below average. The proportion of students

with an education, health and care plan is low.

- A small number of pupils are educated in off-site provision for one day a week at West Suffolk College, where they follow a construction course.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty’s Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector on the first day. They were joined by a further three Ofsted Inspectors for the second of the two days.
- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence from: 32 lesson observations, some carried out with the headteacher or a senior leader; short visits to lessons; discussions with pupils and staff; meetings with staff, governors and the chief executive of the multi-academy trust; reviews of pupils’ work in books; reviews of the school’s website, documents and assessment information; and general observations of the daily operations of the school, including social areas.
- Inspectors analysed the 142 standard responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 41 responses to the school’s own staff survey taken during the inspection using the Ofsted staff survey questions.

Inspection team

Adrian Lyons, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Shân Oswald	Ofsted Inspector
John Mitcheson	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Lesley Daniel	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector
Sean Powell	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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
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