

Inspection of The St Leonards Academy

Edinburgh Campus, Edinburgh Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN38 8HH

Inspection dates: 14 to 15 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy coming to school. They say that their school is getting better. Pupils feel that staff care about their welfare. The school's large safeguarding and well-being team offers effective support to help pupils to feel safe in school. Pupils value the inclusive nature of their school. As one pupil said, 'Pupils can be whoever they want to be, and others will respect that'.

Leaders have high expectations of behaviour, although the new policies recently introduced have not yet been fully embedded. Behaviour in lessons is significantly improving. However, poor behaviour around the school site, particularly at social times and between lessons, causes concern for some pupils and staff. Pupils say that bullying does sometimes happen. Most pupils say that staff usually act quickly when it is reported.

Pupils and parents are pleased that the extra-curricular clubs have restarted. There is a wide range on offer, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards Scheme and many sports clubs. Pupils' experience of learning in the classroom is, however, variable. The curriculum is not consistently well-thought-through.

Although leaders have attempted to improve levels of attendance, too many pupils do not come into school regularly enough.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Increased stability in senior leadership is helping to improve the school. Staff at all levels feel supported in their work by the trust. School leaders are in the process of designing a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils. They are aware that currently there are inconsistencies in the planning and delivery in different subjects.

In English, leaders have a clear view of the knowledge and skills that pupils need at the end of each year. Teachers present their subject knowledge well. In mathematics, leaders have planned a curriculum that builds well on what pupils know. They ensure that pupils have appropriate time to practise and apply new knowledge.

These strengths are not seen in every subject. Leaders have not clearly identified in all subjects what is the most important content to be taught or the most appropriate order to teach it in. Very small numbers of pupils choose to study a modern foreign language at GCSE. Leaders have started to tackle this by changing the way that the courses are delivered.

Teachers in some subjects regularly check what pupils know and remember. This includes 'do it now' activities at the start of lessons and tests at the end of topics. These help to ensure that pupils are more secure in their knowledge. In other subjects, due to weaknesses in planning, pupils are often given more information

than they need. This makes it difficult for pupils to know what must be learned and what needs to be remembered.

Reading is high on leaders' agenda. There has been a significant investment in supporting pupils to improve their confidence with reading. There is also a strong focus on reading for pleasure, with books easily available for pupils to borrow.

The personal, social and health education curriculum is well planned and carefully sequenced. Pupils learn about important issues such as consent, healthy relationships, and online safety. In lessons, pupils are confident to express their views and respectfully listen to views of others. Careers education is a strength at the school. The careers curriculum is well-planned and sequenced. Leaders' focus on 'well-being, employability and citizenship' is evident in practice. Pupils receive balanced and detailed advice and guidance.

A new special educational needs coordinator has recently been appointed. The special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) team is well supported by trust leaders to ensure that pupils' needs are accurately identified and assessed. All staff have access to appropriate information, called 'Student snapshot' and increasingly provide appropriate support to the pupils with SEND in their lessons.

Leaders have recently introduced specific actions to improve attendance. For some pupils this is already resulting in reduced absence. For other pupils, leaders acknowledge that there is more to be done.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. The designated safeguarding lead is knowledgeable and experienced. All staff are dedicated to keeping pupils safe. They are aware of local safeguarding risks. Leaders work well with external agencies and challenge them to safeguard pupils effectively.

All staff receive regular safeguarding training. The school has clear systems and processes in place for recording concerns. The safeguarding team act promptly upon any concerns raised. Pupils know where to seek support if they have a worry. They feel that staff are approachable and will listen and help.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not consistently coherent or well sequenced. This means that pupils are not learning as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is precisely planned and sequenced to enable pupils to deepen their knowledge, remember more, and develop their skills over time.

- Pupils' attendance is not high enough, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Levels of persistent absence are too high. This means that some pupils are missing essential learning. Leaders must redouble their work to ensure that all pupils are in school regularly.
- Pupils and staff are not yet clear about the expectations of behaviour or the sanctions that follow for non-compliance. At times, pupils' behaviour around school is poor. Leaders should ensure that the structures and systems in place for managing and monitoring behaviour are understood and applied consistently.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	136400
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10226867
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,468
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Professor Christopher Pole
Principal	Jon Francies
Website	http://www.thestleonardsacademy.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	25 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes to the leadership of the school. There are a number of very recent appointments, including senior leaders, the teacher responsible for pupils with SEND and some subject leaders. The principal has been in post permanently since January 2022.
- The St Leonards Academy is a member of the University of Brighton Academies Trust.
- The school has an on-site unit for 18 pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and physical disability.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 13 receive information about the full range of education and training choices open to them.
- The school uses five alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, senior leaders, subject leaders, the leader responsible for pupils with SEND and many teachers.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the local board and one of the trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, art and geography. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons and spoke to teachers. They looked at curriculum planning and pupils' work. They met with pupils to discuss their learning.
- Inspectors also visited a range of lessons in other subjects. In these lessons, they checked pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks and spoke to leaders responsible for safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils to hear their views. Inspectors also spoke to pupils informally around the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential Ofsted surveys for staff and pupils and Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors visited tutor time, attended an assembly and held telephone conversations with staff who work with pupils at alternative provision places.

Inspection team

Ann Fearon, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Owen McColgan	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Foster	Ofsted Inspector
Eliot Hodges	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Bzikot	Ofsted Inspector

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