

Inspection of The Sele School

Welwyn Road, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG14 2DG

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe in this inclusive, welcoming school. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, are respectful to each other and to staff. They celebrate their individual differences. Sixth-form students act as good role models for younger pupils. Negative attitudes, such as hurtful language, discrimination or bullying are not tolerated in this community. If these occur, they are dealt with effectively by staff.

In and out of class, pupils get along with each other. When poor behaviour and disruption happen, they are dealt with consistently and fairly. Lessons are generally calm places to learn. Pupils want to do well and to succeed.

The school's 'electives' programme supports all pupils, and students in sixth form, to access a range of engaging wider curriculum experiences. From bowling to pottery, to studying mythology, there is something different for everyone to take part in.

While students in the small sixth form access a good-quality curriculum, this is not the same for the pupils in the rest of the school. Pupils experience a variable quality of education where some areas of the curriculum are working better than others.

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

Against the background of the pandemic, the headteacher and his leadership team have made changes to how the school is run. While leaders' actions to address poor behaviour have had a positive impact on school life, planned curriculum improvements are at varying stages of implementation across subjects.

Leaders have reviewed the curriculum plans with subject leaders. The revised plans identify the important knowledge that pupils will learn. This knowledge is arranged in a logical order from Year 7 to Year 13. Planned assessment is matched appropriately to the knowledge and skills taught. Where the curriculum is most effectively delivered, subject leaders and teachers know the plans well. They choose resources and activities in class that support pupils' knowledge and skills to build sequentially over time.

However, this is not the case across all subjects. Some curriculum leaders and teachers are new. Others are still developing their thinking about the best teaching approaches to support pupils' learning. Too often, in a range of subjects, resources are not well chosen, or teachers do not check pupils' understanding thoroughly. Despite senior leaders' intentions, the curriculum is not yet implemented in a way that is consistently effective. Consequently, pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

The curriculum in the small sixth form is stronger than it is for younger pupils. Here, students benefit from well-chosen learning activities that support their learning well.

Teachers have the right subject and teaching knowledge to support students. Work is demanding and teachers help students to make connections with other learning, so they build on what they already know. As a result, students achieve well.

Leaders identify the individual needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) accurately. While many teachers make effective adaptations to their lessons to support pupils with SEND, this is not consistently the case. Some teachers do not plan effectively in order to support these pupils well enough. Sixth-form students with SEND achieve well, but some younger pupils with SEND do not.

Leaders identify pupils who need extra help with their reading. However, plans to support these pupils have only just been put in place. It is too early to tell whether this will help the weakest readers to catch up with their peers.

Staff have high expectations of how pupils should behave. Consistent approaches to dealing with poor behaviour have resulted in a decline in negative conduct around the school. Short-term suspensions have reduced. Learning is not disrupted very often. Pupils' positive behaviour choices demonstrate the school's motto of 'I am not led, I lead'.

The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is a strength of the school. Pupils and sixth-form students access a range of topics that promote their personal development. Pupils learn, for example, about relationships, different cultures and religions. Assemblies and form time support the PSHE curriculum by reinforcing key themes and building on pupils' experiences in class. Independent careers information is shared with all pupils and students to help them make the right choices about their next steps in education, employment or training.

Leaders are on the right track to improve the curriculum. They have the backing of many parents. Some subject leaders, however, need further training to ensure they are confident to support curriculum improvements effectively. While trustees have a good understanding of most aspects of the school's work, they have not yet restarted their curriculum monitoring since the pandemic. They have only recently had training in how to do this well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Effective training ensures that staff know when a pupil may be at risk of harm or abuse. Reporting processes are clear and well understood. Leaders' safeguarding records show accurate chronologies of concerns. The information recorded is analysed to spot safeguarding trends and patterns. Records show appropriate actions to address any concerns. Leaders work closely with a range of agencies to get pupils the help they need.

Staff know the risks to pupils in their community. Pupils can explain confidently the dangers associated with issues such as e-safety, knife crime and gang culture.

Leaders have effective processes in place for safer recruitment and to manage allegations against adults.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff, including some middle leaders, have not had the training they need in order to implement and evaluate the impact of curriculum changes effectively. As a result, teachers do not always plan activities that are consistently matched well to subject content, or to checks on previous learning. Gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills are missed, so they do not achieve as well as they should. This variation is not systematically addressed by some middle leaders. Senior leaders and the trust must ensure that all staff have access to the training they need to implement the intended curriculum consistently well and for middle leaders to evaluate the quality of provision accurately so it continues to improve.
- Some teachers do not use the information about support for pupils with SEND in order to adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. This means that pupils with SEND do not always achieve well across subjects. Leaders should ensure that all teachers have the knowledge and skills they need to adapt the curriculum effectively so that pupils with SEND achieve well from their different starting points.
- Strategies to support the weakest readers are very new. Consequently, those pupils who need extra help to read well are not catching up with their peers quickly enough. Leaders should expedite the implementation of the new approach, evaluate its effectiveness and make any further changes necessary to continue to improve the capacity of weaker readers to access the curriculum.
- While trustees have had training to monitor the curriculum, they have not yet put this into practice. This means they are not clear where the weaknesses are in the curriculum, or which subject leaders need further training and development. Trustees should implement their programme of curriculum monitoring quickly so that they have the information they need to hold leaders to account and to support them in improving the quality of provision over time.

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.

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	138484
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10241738
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	427
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	11
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Beattie
Headteacher	Christopher Quach
Website	www.sele.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in April 2020. He was joined by a new deputy headteacher in September 2021.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers.
- Currently, there are no students in Year 12.
- The requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships, are met.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: art, English, history, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils about learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the trust, including the chair of the trust.
- The lead inspector held a telephone call with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils, including most of the students in the sixth form.
- Inspectors met with a range of leaders, including the school's special educational needs coordinator.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the school's safeguarding leaders. Inspectors looked closely at safeguarding systems, processes and records. They spoke with pupils, staff and trustees about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the 96 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 51 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the 29 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and 57 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lesley Daniel	Ofsted Inspector
Tessa Holledge	His Majesty's Inspector

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