

# Inspection of Sir John Lawes School

Manland Way, Harpenden, Hertfordshire AL5 4QP

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Inspection dates: 28 and 29 March 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Sixth-form provision

**Outstanding**

Previous inspection grade

**Outstanding**

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected since 27 February 2008.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Life for pupils at this school is 'A.C.E'. The values of 'Achievement, Care and Excellence' run through all aspects of school life. Pupils at the school are scholars, leaders and mentors. Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about their school community. They say that the experiences, support and challenges that the school provides make a significant difference to their lives.

Pupils' experiences at this school are exceptional. They take part in an extraordinary choice of clubs, trips and opportunities, as well as giving to the wider community. All pupils follow a thoughtful and well-considered curriculum. Pupils are very well supported to build their knowledge and skills over time. They work hard and produce high-quality work.

Pupils care for each other. They learn 'not to be a bystander' and call out poor behaviour on the rare times it happens. They demonstrate genuine consideration and interest in the well-being of others. Pupils are articulate and confident in sharing their ideas with adults and peers. Bullying is rare and dealt with effectively if it occurs.

Pupils demonstrate consistently positive manners, thoughtfulness and excellent behaviour. These high expectations have been well planned, rehearsed and embedded by leaders. Pupils focus on their learning in lessons. They are not disrupted by others. Pupils are tolerant and feel safe.

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

Leaders have put in place a highly ambitious, well-designed curriculum. Teachers expertly deliver the key knowledge. They address misconceptions and build on pupils' previous learning. They have high expectations of what pupils know and can do. Teachers provide personalised support, where needed, so that all pupils can succeed with their learning. Teachers revisit knowledge and help pupils make links in their learning. For example, in languages, pupils develop their vocabulary knowledge to increase their fluency over time.

Teachers consider how best to develop 'scholars' in their area. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They plan for pupils to build subject skills, as well as detailed knowledge. Work set is demanding. Pupils make exceptional progress, easily drawing on their expert knowledge and vocabulary. Pupils show a high level of independence in their learning. Leaders ensure this is planned into the curriculum from Year 7.

The provision and help for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is excellent. Staff are very well trained and provide highly effective support in class for pupils with SEND. Teachers take time to get to know their pupils' needs. Support is tailored to each pupil and is regularly monitored and reviewed. Actions of

teachers change over time because of the impact of the support they have given. Pupils with SEND make very good progress.

Reading is a top priority for the school. A wide range of effective interventions support pupils who are behind to catch up with their literacy skills and reading knowledge. Pupils are articulate and read widely. Books are well considered by leaders in English. Pupils are given time to read each week, and the library is central to encouraging pupils to read for enjoyment. Teachers in all subject areas carefully consider the texts they use and have a very clear focus on vocabulary.

Staff induct pupils expertly into the school and clearly outline the behaviours expected in this community. As a result, excellent behaviour is 'the norm' at the school. Diversity is important in the school and celebrated by all. It is okay to be different. Pupils want to attend school, as they enjoy school life. The 'attendance challenge' has had significant impact on improving the attendance of pupils.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities, including an extensive leadership programme. Leaders have carefully planned for pupils' wider experiences so that they develop the talents and interests of all pupils, including the most disadvantaged. Students in the sixth form are central to the delivery of activities, as well as acting as mentors. They are excellent role models for others. The 'have you met' programme is exceptional and supports pupils to introduce themselves to others. This embedded programme allows pupils to share their interests and strengths with pupils, staff and governors. They then go on to train others, developing their own knowledge and leadership in the process. This programme exemplifies the person-centred approach of the school, where staff focus on developing each individual to be their best.

High-quality careers advice and guidance runs through all aspects of the school's work. Pupils make well informed decisions about their curriculum, activities and next steps. Students in the sixth form move on to a range of appropriate destinations, including universities, workplaces and apprenticeships.

All staff and governors are passionate about the school. They are ambitious for every pupil. Governors are knowledgeable about key aspects of the school, such as safeguarding, and are highly effective. Leaders have ensured that staff have the professional development and resources they need. Staff are clear that leaders take their well-being into account and that this care runs through everything in a well-considered way. Leaders have systematically put in place a school of exceptional quality.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a relentless focus on the safety and well-being of each child. Staff are trained to spot if children are at risk. They are confident in their responsibility

towards pupils. Leaders work together to ensure a comprehensive response is put in place for any pupil who needs it. The school works with a range of agencies and has effective systems to review the impact on the individual.

Staff teach pupils exceptionally well about risk. As a result, pupils know and can discuss issues that may impact them. They know where to go for help.

Leaders ensure rigorous processes are in place when recruiting staff and maintain thorough and appropriate checks.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137270
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10242259
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,345
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	350
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Martin Sidders
<b>Headteacher</b>	Phil Newbery
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sjl.herts.sch.uk">www.sjl.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27 February 2008 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

## Information about this school

- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## 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 met with the headteacher and members of his team responsible for various areas of the school's work, including SEND, safeguarding, careers guidance and attendance.
- Inspectors met with four members of the local governing body, as well as the chair of the trust and the chief executive officer.
- An inspector spoke to a leader from the alternative provision the school uses.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history, languages, physical education and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects and visited lessons. They visited a range of support and intervention sessions, including for reading.
- Inspectors visited an assembly and form time. They met with several groups of pupils and staff to gather their views of the school, as well as considering the results of the staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors also considered the 417 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with the designated safeguarding lead.

## Inspection team

Carrie McMorn, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Aimee Bray	Ofsted Inspector
Carole Herman	Ofsted Inspector
Charlie Fordham	His Majesty's Inspector
Joe Creswick	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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