

Sheldon School

Hardenhuish Lane, Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN146HJ

Inspection dates

10–11 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress in most subjects and outstanding progress in some, particularly English, physical education, design and technology and art.
- Students' behaviour is exceptional and they really enjoy being in school. They are happy, polite, well-mannered and look after one another very well, so everyone is included. One student said, 'It is OK to be different'. They take very good care of the academy buildings and wear their uniform with pride.
- In lessons, students of all abilities are highly motivated and attentive. Teachers know their subjects really well and in most lessons every student makes at least good progress.
- The new headteacher has made an impressive start and the academy staff have confidence in his leadership. He and other senior leaders have accurately worked out and made clear to staff what needs to be done to improve. Some training has already been provided and teaching is therefore starting to improve.
- Governors know the academy's strengths and weaknesses very well.
- The sixth form is good because students make good progress and are taught well.
- Students in the hearing impaired unit are looked after well and make as much progress as other students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Most students make good, rather than outstanding progress in mathematics and science but the rates of progress are rapidly increasing.
- There is not enough outstanding teaching. In many lessons, although students make good progress, because they are extremely well behaved and cooperative, they spend too much time listening to the teacher rather than working independently.
- The school is not regularly checking the progress made by different groups of students, such as those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, or who are disabled or those who have special educational needs. The academy's leaders have already started to tackle this issue.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 52 lessons, of which 13 were jointly observed with a member of the academy’s leadership team. In addition, two inspectors undertook learning walks, making a number of short visits to lessons to look at provision for lower-ability students, disabled students and those with special educational needs and those with a hearing impairment.
- Meetings were held with five groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, two other members of the governing body and academy staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors took account of the 175 responses to the on-line Parent View survey during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work, and looked at a number of documents, including the academy’s own data on achievement, self-evaluation, improvement planning, staff training, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documents relating to safeguarding, and students’ work.

Inspection team

Mary Massey, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Fran Ashworth	Additional Inspector
Svetlana Bajic Raymond	Additional Inspector
Russell Bennett	Seconded Inspector
Teresa Hill	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sheldon School is larger than the average-sized secondary school, with a large sixth form. It converted to an academy in April 2011. When it was last inspected in March 2008, it was judged to be an outstanding school with an outstanding sixth form.
- A new headteacher and one of the two deputy headteachers took up their posts at the start of the current term. At the time of the inspection they had been at the school for five weeks.
- The academy is one of three secondary schools that serve Chippenham and the surrounding villages.
- Most students are of White British heritage and almost all speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after and those with a parent serving in the armed forces) is well below that found nationally.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs that are supported through school action, school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average. The academy has a unit for students with hearing impairment with places for 10 students, of which eight are currently filled.
- There are partnerships with a number of alternative education providers, most notably a local special school.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all lessons are stimulating, interesting and allow students to spend more time learning actively and independently and less time listening
 - making sure teachers build more quickly on what students already know and provide more challenging activities, especially for the brightest
 - finding out how well students are doing through marking and questioning and making sure that feedback helps students know how to improve
 - meeting the needs of disabled students and those with special educational needs, by providing the right work for them and making better use of teaching assistants
 - setting clear student performance targets for individual teachers and using the outstanding practice already in the academy to provide guidance for teachers to develop their skills.
- Develop a rigorous system for checking and analysing the achievement and attendance of different groups of students, especially those who are eligible for the pupil premium, disabled students and those with special educational needs.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students get consistently high GCSE results. Their achievement in English is outstanding. When they arrive at the school in Year 7, most have done well at Key Stage 2, so good GCSE results are to be expected. Brighter students make more progress between Year 7 and Year 11 than those who find learning more difficult. Girls and boys do equally well.
- Standards in mathematics and science are not quite as strong as in many other subjects, but are on track to improve substantially in 2013. Nevertheless, even in these subjects, most students make good progress in lessons and the rate of progress is increasing. This is because their excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to learning mean that they work very hard even when the work they are given is not presented in an interesting and stimulating way.
- Disabled students, including those with hearing impairment, and those with special educational needs are well taken care of by a large team of teaching assistants. GCSE results in 2012 show that these students make as much progress as others. However, the academy does not carefully measure the progress these students make often enough to find out whether the specialised support they get is making a difference.
- For many subjects, students need to have an A or B grade at GCSE in order to continue studying them in the sixth form. This means that A- and AS-level results are high in comparison with other schools but students make good rather than outstanding progress from GCSE level.
- The new headteacher has already started to improve the way the academy regularly checks each student's progress and how this information is used and reported to parents and carers. A new system has already been introduced and teachers are beginning to use it, but there is not yet enough information to indicate how far it is making a difference. Individual students who are underachieving are identified and helped to improve, but the academy does not regularly check the progress of groups of students, such as disabled students and those with special educational needs, or those who are eligible for the pupil premium.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The atmosphere in classrooms is very calm and purposeful, but lacks excitement. Students say that it is 'not cool' to misbehave, and they work hard. Staff and students get on well. This means that students feel very safe, so they are willing to ask questions and readily join in with any activities they are given. In the best lessons, they are absorbed in their work because they find it interesting and it is at the right level for them. In some subjects, such as English, physical education, art and design and technology, students often work in groups and teachers make clear exactly what they need to do to complete the work well. Teachers ask questions that encourage students to think for themselves. Feedback through marking and conversations is regular, thorough and helpful. As a result, in these subjects, students find the lessons very enjoyable and often make outstanding progress.
- In other lessons, although the teachers have excellent subject knowledge, they spend too long talking, so students do not have enough time to work together and learn for themselves. Students are patient and cooperative, and do as they are asked, so they make good progress, but the way the work is presented is not as interesting and does not encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning. This is especially true in mathematics and science.
- In the best lessons the teacher uses information from asking questions, marking and tests to find out the needs of each individual so the right activities are provided to help each student learn. In some subjects, however, marking is not done carefully or often enough. Sometimes the work set is too easy for the most-able students and too hard for others.
- Most teaching assistants work well in lessons with disabled students and those with statements of special educational needs. In some cases these students are not encouraged enough to be

independent and teaching assistants' skills are not always used most effectively to support other students with special educational needs in the class who may also need help.

- The academy has clear guidance for teachers on the best ways to improve students' reading and writing in subjects other than English. Often, key words and spellings are provided and English is corrected when books are marked, but this does not happen in every subject. There is no agreed way of developing students' numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics.
- In the sixth form, lessons are often more interesting than in the main school and give students a greater variety of activities with more opportunities to work independently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students are overwhelmingly positive about the academy. They enjoy being in school and attendance is high. When questioned, comments such as, 'This place is fabulous', and 'I love school,' were typical. Students always behave well both in lessons and around the school site. They are courteous to one another, staff and visitors. This is the case even when they are moving in crowded areas such as corridors between lessons or in the refectory. Students from all year groups mix well together; they say that everyone is included and that there is no discrimination. There are many opportunities for students to take on responsibilities; for example, by acting as sports leaders, mentors, subject ambassadors and prefects.
- It is unusual for students to be excluded. The academy is very good at managing behaviour. Good partnerships within the local community are used to find ways of providing a different curriculum that suits some students who find it more difficult to behave well.
- Students say they feel absolutely safe in school and that on the rare occasions that bullying happens it is dealt with very quickly and decisively. All kinds of bullying, including racism and homophobia, are well understood and students have confidence in teachers to sort things out if there is a problem. They behave sensibly and know how to keep themselves safe, especially on social networking sites and on the internet.
- Parents and carers are very pleased indeed with the school. It is unusual to find almost all who responded to our questionnaire on Parent View saying that their child is safe and that behaviour and bullying are dealt with well, but in this school this is the case.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher and the senior team are well aware of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. They walk around the school regularly, checking on lessons with heads of department, finding out how teaching needs to improve to become outstanding. The skills of the best teachers already in the academy are starting to be used to support and coach others. In the last few weeks, ambitious achievement targets for the academy have been set to encourage teachers to expect more from students. The response from teachers to the recent changes is very positive.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced with students studying a wide range of subjects at GCSE, and appropriate courses are available for those who do some of their training outside school. However, senior leaders have started a review to find out if the curriculum and the way sets are organised suit all students equally well. There is a very wide range of after-school and lunchtime clubs, particularly sport, and most students join in.
- Although money from the pupil premium has been used to provide extra support, including one-to-one tuition and extra help from teaching assistants, there has not been enough checking to find out if this has improved students' achievement.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students say that personal, social and religious education is a 'fun' subject and they have an excellent awareness of other

cultures and religions and their local community. An example of unusually good moral and social development was seen during the inspection when some students, observing a disagreement between other students, took steps to diffuse the situation.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body understands the strengths and weaknesses of the academy well and knows how it needs to get better. Governors used their knowledge to recruit a headteacher they believed would make improvements rapidly, particularly to teaching and achievement in mathematics and science. They are very pleased with the changes he has made in just a short time. Governors ask challenging questions but also provide support and take an active role within the academy, visiting regularly and finding out the views of students, staff, parents and carers. Financial management is creative, prudent and efficient, demonstrating excellent value for money. Staffing levels are high and many of the academy's facilities have recently been improved, with a new refectory and sixth form accommodation. Arrangements for safeguarding students are exemplary.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136632
Local authority	Non-maintained
Inspection number	395524

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1802
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jeremy Hilton
Headteacher	Mr Neil Spurdell
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01249 766020
Fax number	01249 445732
Email address	admin@sheldonschool.co.uk

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