

Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School

Oxford Road, Aylesbury, Bucks HP21 8PE

Inspection dates

28–29 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding academy

- 'This is the best place in the world,' one pupil commented to inspectors. Staff, pupils, and the majority of parents are overwhelmingly positive about the academy: the love of learning it fosters, the range of opportunities it provides, and the care it gives.
- Leaders and governors are not complacent; they constantly strive to make the academy better.
- The governing body is excellently led by the chair. Governors view pupils' success and well-being as paramount and insist that leaders rapidly remove any obstacles to these goals.
- Senior leaders nurture the talents of staff and pupils very effectively. They ensure that the academy has the capacity to go from strength to strength.
- Heads of faculties and subjects play pivotal roles in improving the academy. Their ambition and drive has been instrumental in recent improvements in examination results. However, they do not have enough opportunities to work together as a team.
- Pupils achieve very highly. They make strong progress from their starting points. GCSE results have improved year-on-year, and in 2015 were the best yet, as were A-level and IB results.
- Pupils are inspired to learn because teaching is strong and, in some areas, outstanding. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which they impart to pupils enthusiastically and purposefully.
- The curriculum affords pupils opportunities to excel academically, develop a broad range of skills, and pursue their passions.
- Leaders and governors have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour, which they determinedly uphold and which pupils meet.
- The academy's work to ensure that pupils value diversity and treat others equally without prejudice is very effective. Work to promote fundamental British values is not yet as effective.
- Changes made to the way pastoral and academic support is provided have improved the impact of additional help on pupils' progress.
- Leaders and governors carry out their safeguarding responsibilities supremely well.
- Many pupils have leadership roles which enable them to make a strong contribution to this aim.
- Sixth form leaders fully support learners in their next steps. The majority gain offers from their first choice universities. Leaders' monitoring of the progress that different groups make is less well developed than monitoring of university applications.
- Learners in the sixth form are taught very successfully and, where necessary, receive very effective additional guidance from their teachers. As a result, the majority of learners achieve their target grades.

Full report

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that subject and faculty leaders are given more opportunities to share their expertise and high ambitions so that they have an even greater impact on improving targeted areas of the academy: the leadership of science subjects, fundamental British values, and the way sixth form monitoring information is analysed.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Pupils flourish at this academy. It provides an outstanding education because the headteacher, leaders, teachers, and assistant teachers are dedicated to instilling the academy's values at every opportunity. These values have been the impetus for many of the changes made in recent years, including the plans to sponsor a local non-selective school. As a result, pupils are not only successful academically but are well-rounded individuals. They have the self-motivation to try hard, learn voraciously, and pursue their goals.
- Pupils were overwhelming in their praise of many aspects of the academy. One pupil commented, 'We are not treated as a statistic, we are individuals'. Pupils were able to articulate precisely and convincingly what makes their academy so special. The vast majority of parents echoed these views, one commenting, 'Whilst there is a rigorous focus on academic excellence, a lot of effort is also put into the emotional well-being of the children. I have a very happy child, which is a big testament to the school.'
- Senior leaders have very successfully identified, developed, and harnessed the skills of subject and faculty leaders. Many of this middle leadership strand have undertaken national programmes to develop their capabilities further. Subject and faculty leaders demonstrate an outstanding commitment to improving the whole academy, for example by very effectively leading task groups on assessing pupils' work without levels. There have been some opportunities for middle leaders to work together as a group. However, these could be developed further so that some less confident leaders can enhance their skills so that the contribution this group as a whole makes to improve the academy is even stronger.
- The majority of faculty and subject leaders are highly effective. Changes to the way that science is led means that the leadership of physics, chemistry and biology is now separated and has, consequently, started to improve. However, subject leadership in science is not yet as well developed as in other subjects.
- Subject leaders have very strong subject knowledge and use this to ensure that planned learning is suitably challenging. Faculty and subject leaders monitor the quality of teaching rigorously and see it as their responsibility to develop the capabilities of teachers in the subject or subjects they manage. They do this very well because they have a winning combination of knowledge about their subject, coupled with a thorough understanding of the best way to teach it.
- The curriculum is very strong because leaders and governors regularly review it to ensure that examination courses are suitably challenging. The International Baccalaureate has been introduced into the sixth form to provide learners with a broader but, nevertheless, academically well-respected qualification. Pupils are also offered further mathematics at GCSE. All pupils now take either two or three separate sciences at GCSE.
- A number of subject and faculty leaders have strengthened the curriculum at Key Stage 3 so it is more demanding. For example, in music, teachers have taken full account of the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed at A Level to ensure that planned tasks for Key Stage 3 provide opportunities to explore topics in depth. This is part of an academy-wide emphasis on increasing the level of challenge in Key Stage 3, which includes setting up a new way of assessing pupils in Key Stage 3 using the 1–9 GCSE scale.
- Senior leaders have strengthened the way that they monitor teaching, learning, and assessment so that it is more holistic. Senior leaders take the robust and sophisticated feedback pupils provide into account when evaluating teaching. Following leaders' monitoring, some staff receive additional support, delivered as part of a 'personal development plan'. The plan has a strong subject input and this approach has led to better teaching.
- The academy has very high expectations of all its staff. These expectations are reinforced through the targets leaders set to manage teachers' performance. These targets are challenging and have been recently reviewed. They now include a requirement for all teachers to make a positive contribution to the academy as a whole, as well as ensuring that the pupils they teach make very strong progress. The academy requires all teachers on the upper pay scale to be outstanding practitioners. Consequently, some teachers did not progress in their pay last year.
- Recent, well thought-out and effective changes have been made to the way that support for pupils with special educational needs is provided. Assistant teachers play a greater role in supporting the needs of the whole class. This means that the subject teacher has the chance to work during the lesson, and in a highly focused way, with pupils who have additional needs. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) is carefully monitoring the impact of this new approach. Pupils with additional needs are also

provided with effective, bespoke help through small group and one-to-one sessions with assistant teachers, and, where necessary, through working with experts from external agencies.

- Senior leaders have made substantial and effective changes to the way pastoral care and additional academic help is provided. The SENCO, who is now also interventions leader, carefully monitors the impact of any additional help provided or organised by the skilled team of assistant teachers, including that for disadvantaged pupils. A number of this team have some expertise in counselling and the majority have degree-level qualifications. They very capably provide, and oversee, all the support that pupils need to succeed, whether it be pastoral or academic. This has led to improved achievement for targeted pupils, including for disadvantaged pupils.
- To further improve pupils' progress this year, a deputy headteacher is additionally targeting pupils whose progress towards meeting their GCSE targets, whether they be A* or lower grades, is weakest. She ensures that this group receives appropriate help at the level they need it. The academy's own information shows that the majority of this group have made academic improvements, as well as in their attitudes to learning. Most of these pupils are now on track to meet their targets.
- The leadership of pupils' behaviour is very effective and, as a result, pupils' conduct is consistently very good. Leaders have put new systems in place to ensure that they can keep a very close eye on the type of behaviour concerns that are most often identified by staff. This information is shared with form tutors, assistant teachers and heads of year so that they can better focus their work with pupils.
- The academy offers a vast array of activities and additional experiences that very effectively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural education, particularly through arts and music. Extra-curricular opportunities offered in these areas are a strength of the academy. For example, there are 16 different choirs, one of which is dedicated to singing on crowded corridors at lunchtimes. Pupils who join the academy in Year 7 participate in a university-style 'freshers' fair' to see which of the 72 clubs on offer they wish to join. A large number of these are successfully run by sixth formers as part of the academy's focus on promoting leadership.
- All pupils participate in the global diversity week. This year it will be based on the theme of religion. The week is planned and led by pupils and provides valuable opportunities for the whole community to learn about, and experience cultures and beliefs from around the world. High profile, memorable experiences such as these serve to strengthen the tolerant, inclusive learning environment of the academy.
- Fundamental British values are effectively explored through events, assemblies, and clubs, for example, in philosophy society. The separate values of the rule of law, democracy, individual freedom, and tolerance are covered well. However, not enough attention is paid to ensuring these values are effectively promoted within the curriculum as part of a coordinated programme, which leaders can monitor and evaluate with ease.
- **The governance of the academy:**
 - Governance is outstanding. Governors have played a key role in improving the academy. The Chair of the Governing Body very effectively leads the other governors. Governors know the academy exceptionally well. They are trained effectively and use their new knowledge and skills to interpret examination results and current information on pupils' progress insightfully. As a result, the governing body has been successful in challenging the academy to do better. This includes making changes to the way that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent so that it has greater impact. Of particular note has been the governing body's insistence that the academy set higher targets for the proportion of pupils achieving A/A* grades at GCSE. Their persistence has paid off and leaders have, consequently, shown full commitment to this goal, which has been reached.
 - The governing body oversees teachers' performance very effectively. They do not go into unnecessary detail but nevertheless have a strong understanding of what needs to be included in teachers' performance management targets so that the academy improves further. Governors have just reviewed the academy's pay policy and added further challenge to teachers' targets. They have supported leaders in resolving staffing issues very well.
 - Governors have been particularly proactive in the checks that they have made on trips abroad and have, on occasion, denied permission for trips to go ahead where they have had any concerns. They attend pre-trip briefings with parents to reinforce the academy's strong messages about safety and pupils' conduct. They also check that the academy's leaders have taken full account of any potential risks. Governors are highly aware that parents place a great deal of trust in the staff who led the trips abroad. They rightly ensure that this trust is well-founded.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that pupils are safe by educating all pupils as to the risks they face as teenagers, and providing effective targeted support for individuals who may be at risk of harm. The former approach is evident through the strong work being done in personal

development lessons about e-safety. The academy ensures that parents are also provided with the information they need to help keep their sons and daughters safe when online. Designated leaders have attended 'Prevent' training to help them to identify pupils who may be at risk of being radicalised. A number of staff have yet to receive this training.

- Pupils who have specific needs are provided with the support they require and the impact of this is carefully monitored. This includes in-house counselling as well as access to a wider range of external services. All 'Raising Achievement Officers' are trained as designated safeguarding leaders, in order to ensure that, should a pupil wish to disclose a concern, there will always be a trained staff member available. The academy's intervention leader closely tracks pupils referred to social services to check that they receive the right level of support in a timely manner and that it is effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is generally extremely high and in a number of subjects it is outstanding. It is very strong in music, humanities (including politics taught in the 16–19 study programmes), modern foreign languages, English literature, and mathematics.
- The teaching in music is excellent and is now improving in other performing arts subjects too. This is because the newly appointed head of the performing arts faculty ensures that effective approaches from music, such as highly focused feedback on pupils' practical work, are incorporated across the faculty.
- In music, many pupils have already gained a high level in the instruments they play but they are still challenged by the work the teacher sets. Those who have little knowledge of playing an instrument also make rapid progress. This is due to the combination of very well planned opportunities for pupils to use feedback from their peers and the clear way the teacher lays out what pupils need to do and how they should go about doing it.
- There was some turbulence in staffing in the English department at the very start of the academic year, which meant that some pupils did not initially make the strong progress of which they are capable. However, the head of English has monitored the work of the new teachers who arrived after this turbulence and provided them with additional support. Consequently, the majority of pupils are catching up and meeting their challenging targets.
- In mathematics, teachers have very strong subject knowledge which they use very well. For example, in a further mathematics lesson in Year 13, the teacher knew both the topic (complex numbers) in depth, as well as each learner's capacity to wrestle with the high conceptual demands it presents. This meant that when learners asked for help, she knew precisely who would benefit from being given direct assistance and who had the skill to respond to probing questions and work out the algorithm for themselves. This approach enabled all pupils to make very strong progress in a hard topic.
- Teaching in many subjects is highly effective because lessons are very well planned. One pupil described their teachers' planning as 'meticulous'. This manifests itself in the way tasks are pitched at an appropriately high level so they enable pupils to gain the depth of knowledge and skills needed to achieve A* grades in examinations. For example, in modern foreign languages pupils are given the opportunity to become fluent in the grammar required to achieve at the top levels.
- Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to ensure the resources they provide stimulate pupils' imagination, give rise to debate, and challenge all pupils. For example, pupils were given a controversial poem as a stimulus for a dance sequence, they analysed soviet propaganda posters when studying 'Animal Farm' in English, and in mathematics pupils evaluated the best designs for rabbit hutches when studying volume.
- In many subjects, teachers ensure that pupils make very good use of writing and discussion to consolidate their ideas and formulate a response to challenging stimuli. They make good use of vocabulary that shows subject expertise. Teachers guide pupils effectively to ensure that these responses are informative, sophisticated and meet the criteria for success.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare.

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils have a genuine and heartfelt desire to expand their knowledge, contribute positively to their learning community, and give of their best in all that they do. Pupils prize their academy; they, like the staff, are committed to making it as good as it can be.
- An ethos of respect and pride runs through the academy. Pupils present their work neatly, wear their uniform smartly and go out of their way to be courteous to staff, visitors, and each other. They show admiration for their academy and all that it stands for.
- The 'Floyd Learner Profile' is successfully promoted. Pupils know what they have to do to learn well and become successful learners. In many subjects, pupils challenge themselves, each other, and their teachers by asking for further explanation. In a chemistry lesson, pupils were keen to ensure that they made good notes as the teacher explained reactivity. They asked how they should best do this as well as using their knowledge of scientific principles to challenge some of the teachers' explanations.
- The academy's environment is very nurturing because pupils feel that they have a duty of care to other members of their community. Older pupils play a key role in supporting younger pupils through running clubs, and acting as subject ambassadors, and prefects. All members of the academy are very well-versed in how to keep safe, including the risks of being groomed when online, and how to promote their own and others' well-being.
- Careers education is in the process of transition so it is better coordinated. It has been delivered through well-planned 'careers days', which make good use of visiting speakers. Pupils in Years 8 and 10 also undertake an exercise led by trained careers coaches to help them identify their own attitudes and motivations and link these to possible career paths. Robust plans are in place to integrate careers fully into personal development lessons throughout the academy. Pupils value the way that their subject teachers inspire them to pursue careers closely linked to subjects they study, for example to become doctors.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Leaders assiduously gather information on pupils' conduct, both positive and negative. They use this to ensure that pupils are rewarded when appropriate and also to discover any patterns in negative behaviour. If this is the case, they take preventative steps with pupils to help them to improve. Leaders also make very good use of this information to identify if any teacher needs additional assistance in managing behaviour. This assistance is sharply focused and closely monitored by middle and senior leaders.
- The bar is set very high as to what constitutes unacceptable conduct. In the context of this academy, it includes wearing uniform sloppily and shouting out answers in class. This has helped to raise standards of behaviour and they are now very high.
- Pupils display high levels of self-discipline and know that they have a large part to play in making the most of what is offered. One pupil told inspectors, 'I come here for a brighter future'. Pupils know that behaving well in class helps them to achieve this 'brighter future'.
- Absence rates are well below national average, and pupils are largely very punctual because they enjoy their learning so much. The very rare incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively, and an extensive team of peer leaders help to ensure that pupils behave well and sensibly around the busy but safe site at lunch- and break-times.
- Exclusions are very rare but governors and leaders do not shirk this responsibility when, on exceptionally rare occasions, pupils breach the academy's high expectations of acceptable conduct.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Last year, the academy's results were their best to date in most areas. This was because significant changes have been made over the last few years that came to fruition, not least, a greater focus on ensuring that pupils made strong progress in Key Stage 3, as well as in Key Stage 4. Pupils are prepared very well for their largely academic next steps and all Year 11 pupils in 2015 progressed to further education, training, or employment.
- Pupils join the academy with significantly above average Key Stage 2 scores. The majority make very strong progress because the academy has placed great emphasis on improving the proportion of pupils achieving top level grades. As a result, in 2015, almost two-thirds of GCSE entries were graded A to A* grades. This represents a year-on-year rise since 2013.
- In some subjects, a very high proportion of pupils achieved A to A* grades such as in mathematics (69%) and English literature (71%). Leaders have taken actions this year to ensure that current GCSE English language results are as strong as the very good English literature results of 2015. These actions are working well and the gap between the two subjects is on track to narrow in the 2016 GCSE examinations.
- Highly effective subject leadership and focused teaching has led to pupils making very strong progress in a number of subjects. It is exceptionally strong in music, and very strong in French, Spanish, English literature, geography, and history. The subject leaders in these areas have worked together to develop new approaches to assessment. Their expertise in ensuring that pupils from high starting points make strong progress has started to be shared with other subjects that perform slightly less well, but more opportunities are needed to share good practice further.
- In 2015, the progress that the very small numbers of disadvantaged pupils make exceeded that of their peers in the academy and nationally in English and mathematics. This is due to the way that subject and faculty leaders monitored their progress and the way that they were supported by a dedicated team of assistant teachers. Across a wide range of GCSE subjects, the progress that this group made in 2015 is in line with the strong progress that their peers made.
- The academy very effectively ensures that any group of pupils that leaders target, including those eligible for additional funding, make at least as strong progress as other pupils, if not stronger. The deputy headteacher responsible for the needs of these pupils monitors closely the progress of all the groups targeted, including the most able, to ensure that they receive the support they need to meet their targets, whether it be academic or pastoral. Following thorough checks, she does not hesitate to make radical changes if the support is not having the anticipated impact.
- Leaders have ensured that targets set for the end of Key Stage 3 are challenging. To this end, targets set in Year 7 (or in Year 8 as a number of pupils join then) are based on pupils' skill level across a range of areas that require no prior learning, as well as what they achieved at Key Stage 2. The vast majority of pupils make very good progress towards meeting these targets in most subjects, with the exception of chemistry and biology. One reason for this is that some internal tests and assessments in these subjects have not provided pupils with the opportunities to demonstrate their higher level of skill.
- In 2015, pupils with special educational need made less progress in GCSE examinations than other groups. However, it is important to note that very small numbers of special needs pupils make comparisons with national averages less reliable. The academy has identified this group of learners as a focus for improvements this year and there is strong evidence that their progress towards meeting their targets is now as strong as others in the academy.

16 to 19 study programmes

are outstanding

- The sixth form is outstanding because of the way leaders and teachers dedicate themselves to making sure that all learners are successful in their next steps. A significant number join the academy in Year 12, however they are well integrated into the sixth form. A testament to this is the fact that many learners who joined the academy in Year 12 hold key positions on the 'student senior leadership team'.
- Due to strong teaching, learners achieve highly and often make above average progress in their A-level courses. An increasing number opt to take the International Baccalaureate (IB). Leaders recently

introduced this course because they wanted learners to have the opportunity to be rewarded for a wider, but nevertheless intellectually demanding, set of skills. Learners' attainment in IB is improving and the proportion achieving the top range of scores (5–7) in IB has increased since last year, and is now 75%.

- Teaching, learning, and assessment is consistently very strong and there is some outstanding practice in the sixth form. Learners benefit from their teachers' depth of subject knowledge, passion, and academic rigour. Teachers combine this with a thorough and detailed understanding of the requirements of A-level examinations. As a result, learners feel well-prepared for their examinations, in both Years 12 and 13, including a very small number of resits.
- Sixth form learners are taught the high level skills they need to succeed in their next steps. These skills, such as the ability to apply their research, are delivered very effectively in lessons. For example, in a politics lesson, learners used their research to analyse the electoral system from the perspective of different political parties.
- There is strong emphasis in the academy on learners as leaders. Those that excel academically become subject ambassadors. This is a substantial role and involves planning and delivering support for younger pupils. A team of dedicated and skilled prefects help to ensure that the academy is a safe and happy place for all. The 'student senior leadership team', led by the head boy and girl, along with those with other leadership roles, such as the subject ambassadors and house captains provide excellent role models for younger pupils.
- Learners follow a well-planned 'life programme' to prepare them for their next steps. This includes effective careers education. The majority of Year 13 last year achieved places at top universities and much of the careers programme focuses on the process of applying to university. For many, but not all, this forms a very significant aspect of their future aspirations. A minority of learners have aspirations to pursue further training, for which careers support is provided more informally.
- Learners behave impeccably in lessons and around the academy, and demonstrate the highest levels of respect and courtesy to each other, their teachers, and younger pupils. The 'life programme' helps them keep safe and gives them the knowledge needed to assess risks with greater confidence and authority.
- Sixth form leaders are very effective. The information from their tracking of learners' progress indicates that the majority of learners are on course to meet targets based on their GCSE grades. Leaders carefully track learners' progress, and focus on key groups, such as those who join the sixth form from other schools. Sixth form leaders are in the process of strengthening their analysis of the information received from their tracking so that any differences between the progress that different groups of learners make in different subjects and qualifications are identified more promptly.

School details

Unique reference number	136845
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10003534

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	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1189
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	349
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Gaynor Bull
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Box
Telephone number	01296 424781
Website	www.sirhenryfloyd.bucks.sch.uk
Email address	sbox@shfgs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 May 2011

Information about this academy

- Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School is a larger than average-sized school, which is selective. It converted to become an academy just after its last inspection, in July 2011. It is a stand-alone converter academy.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for additional free school meal funding is significantly below average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive SEN support or have a statement or an educational and healthcare plan is significantly less than average.
- The majority of pupils are White British and no pupils attend alternative provision.
- The academy has plans in place that are in the public domain to sponsor a local non-selective school.
- The academy meets the government's minimum expectations for progress and attainment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 38 lessons. In a number of these observations they were accompanied by senior leaders. Inspectors also conducted a number of short visits to classes on different occasions and were accompanied by leaders, including subject leaders, for some of these. Inspectors were given a tour of the academy by the head boy and girl.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject and faculty leaders, newly qualified teachers, a group of assistant teachers, the leaders of the 16–19 study programmes, representatives from the governing body, and small groups of pupils from Key Stages 3 and 4, as well as learners from Key Stage 5. Inspectors made a telephone call to the school improvement partner who supports governors in the management of the headteacher’s performance.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including the school’s records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding records, performance information, development planning, self-evaluation documents, teaching plans for different subjects, and policies. Inspectors scrutinised pupils’ work in books. Inspectors also conducted a separate book scrutiny, in which most of the books belonging to a small sample of pupils, which included disadvantaged pupils, were scrutinised.
- Inspectors took into account the 249 responses to Parent View, 190 comments from parents using the free text facility on Parent View, as well as 368 responses to the pupil survey. Inspectors also took into account staff survey responses.

Inspection team

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