

# LeAF Studio

Holloway Avenue, Bournemouth, Dorset BH11 9JW

## Inspection dates

22–23 January 2019

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders have built a school with a unique identity that serves the needs of its pupils well. Pupils are proud of their school and of their achievements.
- Pupils join the school in order to pursue their talents in the performing arts or sporting arenas. Leaders have created an environment that supports their ambition and dovetails it well with an academic curriculum.
- The quality of teaching in the performing arts and sport is extremely strong. Teachers have a deep knowledge of their subjects and are highly skilled. As a result of the quality of their teaching, pupils are inspired to learn and reach very high standards.
- The quality of individual support and care for pupils is a strength of the school. Staff know their pupils as individuals and are quick to step in when they need additional support.
- Pupils are well behaved. They treat each other with respect and warmth. Bullying is rare. Pupils say there is no place for homophobia, racism or transgender discrimination.
- The leaders of the multi-academy trust (MAT) that oversees the school have brought stability after a period of staffing and financial turbulence. As a result of the support of the trust, the capacity for further improvement is good.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is designed to meet the needs of pupils. The balance of specialist and academic teaching is appropriate. It gives pupils a rounded education while providing time for them to focus on their passion for the performing arts or sport.
- The sixth form is growing rapidly. It provides high-quality teaching of practical subjects. Students are given good opportunities to develop their talents through a strong programme of additional opportunities and high-quality work experience. There is some weaker teaching of theoretical work.
- The quality of teaching is good overall. Consequently, pupils make good progress from their starting points in Year 9, when they first join the school.
- Not all teaching is of the highest quality. Where it is weaker, pupils are not challenged to reach the standards they are capable of. In some cases, pupils cannot make the progress they should because their teachers do not explain how to improve their work with sufficient precision.
- The most able pupils are not always challenged to reach the highest standards in their academic work. Consequently, they sometimes underachieve.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve teaching and learning so that all teaching is as good as the best by ensuring that:
  - pupils are given tasks that match their ability and allow them to make rapid progress
  - pupils know how to improve their work
  - the most able pupils are challenged to reach the highest standards in their academic studies.
- Improve the sixth form by ensuring that all teaching is as effective as that for practical subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The principal communicates a clear vision for the school. She brings to life the school's mission to provide a good all-round education for pupils who have a talent and passion for the performing arts or sport. As a result of her clarity of purpose, teachers, pupils, parents and carers are all committed to the school's success.
- The school joined the MAT in 2017. Trust leaders have successfully stabilised the school – which was suffering from financial and staffing difficulties – and put in place ambitious long-term plans. As a result of the work of trust leaders, the school is now thriving. Numbers on roll are increasing rapidly and the sixth form is increasingly successful.
- Trust and school leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has enabled leaders to focus on key issues and make appropriate plans to further improve the school.
- Leaders have organised the school and curriculum well in order to serve the school's mission. They have ensured that teachers and pupils understand that academic studies and specialist training opportunities must coexist and support one another. This has resulted in a well-balanced curriculum with sufficient time for academic study running alongside a very extensive programme of training and coaching. The opportunities for specialist coaching and training are excellent. The resources available and the quality of coaching on offer are at the heart of why pupils and parents choose this school.
- Leaders have also ensured that the curriculum is rich in opportunities to consider social and moral issues. For example, a piece of dance recently created for a national competition used as its stimulus the intolerance of extremist views and the growth of Nazism.
- Leaders make sure that pupils and sixth-form students are well prepared for the next stages of their education or employment by providing high-quality independent careers advice and guidance. Leaders and teachers are keen to instil in pupils that they need a 'dual career' approach because of the fickle nature of careers in the performing arts and sport. The school is a nationally recognised leader in preparing pupils in this way.
- The leadership of teaching is increasingly effective in improving teaching, learning and assessment across the school. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their classroom practice and focus on specific areas to improve. This approach is bringing tangible improvements in a number of subjects and beginning to raise standards. However, the impact is not consistent. Consequently, some teaching is not good enough to ensure that pupils make good progress in every subject in both key stage 4 and the sixth form.
- Senior leaders work with teachers to monitor the progress of pupils. Teachers are asked to focus particularly on those pupils who are underachieving and to report back on the impact of their work. This is having a positive impact, and standards are rising as a consequence.
- Leaders use the funding available to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. Pupils are monitored closely, and leaders ensure that teachers intervene when necessary. The

nature of the school means that some support is required for pupils to take part in events and competitions. Funding is used wisely to make sure that these pupils are able to access all the opportunities presented.

- The leadership of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. There are robust systems in place to identify and track the progress of pupils with SEND. The additional funding available to support the progress of pupils with SEND is used effectively. Leaders make sure that teachers understand the needs of each pupil and are given advice on how to support them. As a result of this work, pupils who had struggled to make progress in their previous school are now able to make progress.
- Leaders make good use of the resources of the trust to train middle leaders and improve the quality of teaching. Teachers work with their colleagues in other trust schools to strengthen their skills and to make sure of the reliability of their assessments.

### **Governance of the school**

- Trust leaders have put a robust accountability structure in place to hold leaders to account. Leaders report to a panel of trust leaders regularly. They are also strengthening the local governing body, which is expected to take on greater responsibility as it grows in strength and experience.
- Trust leaders have successfully addressed the significant challenges to the life of the school that were apparent when it first joined the trust. Finances are monitored rigorously and value for money evaluated appropriately. The staffing structure has been made fit for purpose. Leaders have also secured the school's future viability. They have achieved this – in part – by moving elements of the trust's sixth-form provision across to the school. This has greatly strengthened the school's capacity.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and teachers work together to create a culture that ensures that pupils are safe. Pupils feel that the nature and small scale of the school mean that teachers know them well and relationships are positive. They know who to go to should they have a concern. Staff work well with external agencies – such as the local authority's social care team – to support vulnerable pupils.
- Leaders have put in place a Monday morning online 'well-being questionnaire' that every pupil completes. This alerts staff to any issues regarding physical or mental health. Pupils report that teachers respond rapidly if they highlight an issue.
- Staff are well trained and know how to respond if a pupil discloses a safeguarding concern. The school's safeguarding records are kept appropriately. Checks on recruitment are thorough. Risk assessments are in place where appropriate.
- Teachers ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when away from home attending competitions or events. They are also taught how to keep themselves safe online.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders and teachers work together to reflect on and improve the quality of teaching across the school. As a result of their work, pupils are now making good progress from their starting points. The best teaching is found in the practical and specialist subjects. In these areas, pupils are inspired by highly effective teaching that challenges them to reach the highest standards. Teachers have an extremely good subject knowledge and they share their deep understanding of their specialisms with pupils, who – as a result – are inspired and strive hard to be successful. Teachers provide detailed and insightful advice to pupils, who respond enthusiastically to the feedback and so their performance improves.
- Pupils are generally well taught in the academic curriculum too. However, there are pockets of weaker teaching. In English, pupils make good progress because teachers set challenging and thought-provoking tasks. Pupils are asked to analyse literature and to express their ideas in well-structured extended passages of writing. Pupils are set appropriately challenging work in other subjects too, although there are inconsistencies. In mathematics, for example, pupils reach good standards in their algebra but then are sometimes allowed to coast through passages of low-level calculations.
- Leaders have introduced a policy of ensuring that pupils regularly receive high-quality advice on how to improve their work. This has had a significant impact in several subjects. In English, for example, pupils respond well, taking great pains to improve their writing when the teacher gives them feedback. Pupils also readily respond to feedback in dance and drama. It is less successful in some other subjects. This is because the advice teachers give is too broad to be helpful. Consequently, pupils cannot learn from it and so they make slower progress.
- Teachers monitor pupils' progress closely and, when pupils fall behind, they receive extra tuition to get them back on track. This is having a positive impact. Pupils say they like the extra help and they respond well to it.
- The most able pupils are not always challenged to reach the highest standards in their academic work. They regularly achieve all that is asked of them but, in some subjects, teachers do not push them to extend themselves and think hard. This is sometimes reinforced by insufficiently demanding targets that are given to pupils that underestimate their potential.
- Literacy is taught well in some subjects, notably English, dance, drama and some science. Here, pupils are encouraged to use subject-specific vocabulary and express themselves clearly. Mistakes are pointed out and corrected. However, this is not always the case in other subjects. In some cases, poor grammar and spelling are not addressed appropriately and pupils repeat the same mistakes. This slows their progress.

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work. They come to school to pursue their performing arts and sporting ambitions and they work hard to achieve them. They pay attention in their classes, work hard and complete their tasks diligently. They generally show positive attitudes in their academic work too, albeit with slightly less fervour. Only when the quality of teaching fails to meet their needs do pupils begin to lose interest. When this happens, they disengage and sit quietly.
- Pupils are very proud of their school, and a significant number travel long distances from home to attend. Their commitment to the additional hours of training, coaching and rehearsal is high. Performing arts pupils regularly win regional and national awards for the quality of their performances. Sports pupils are equally successful. The school's 'wall of fame' is updated regularly to record their achievements.
- Pupils and teachers enjoy positive relationships. Pupils treat each other well. Bullying is rare and, when it does occur, pupils say that teachers address it quickly. The school community welcomes pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds and with different beliefs. Pupils say that they are all made to feel welcome.
- Pupils benefit from good pastoral care. When they need additional support, teachers respond quickly. Parents and pupils feel that teachers listen to them and address their concerns wherever possible.
- Teachers make sure that pupils have opportunities to learn about and discuss the values that underpin modern British society, and particularly how it relates to their chosen field of expertise. For example, pupils can discuss the impact of Ramadan on participation in sport.
- Pupils are able to discuss their potential next steps and careers. They are supported to be ambitious but realistic in pursuit of their goals. Those who have the potential to become professional footballers, for example, understand the importance of a second option should they not be successful.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school site. They move between lessons in an orderly manner and behave well at lunchtimes. The level of exclusions and other sanctions is low.
- Pupils have a higher rate of attendance than in other schools. This is because they are keen to come to school and do not want to miss the opportunities which are provided for them. Disadvantaged pupils attend equally well. Very few pupils miss school regularly.

## Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils in key stage 4 make good progress from their starting points when they first join the school. Their rates of progress in their specialist subjects of the performing arts and sport are very good. Significant proportions of pupils reach the highest standards, both in their GCSEs and in additional qualifications. As a result of their success, most pupils are well prepared to continue on their chosen pathway into post-16 education and training.
- Pupils are becoming increasingly successful in their academic studies. In previous years, pupils had not enjoyed the success that they were capable of. However, pupils are now reaching higher standards. This is because of the focus that leaders are placing on improving the quality of classroom teaching.
- Most disadvantaged pupils are making progress in line with other pupils. This is because their progress is monitored closely, with leaders intervening when needed to keep them on track.
- In English, most pupils are making good progress from their starting points. Pupils can express their ideas clearly in well-structured extended pieces of writing. Progress in mathematics is good overall. However, there are inconsistencies. This is because the gaps in pupils' learning – which are the result of previous weak teaching – have not been adequately addressed.
- Standards of literacy are generally good across the school, including in the sixth form. Pupils can express themselves well. Their grammar and punctuation are sound. Standards of spelling are more inconsistent. In some subjects – notably dance and drama – teachers use a high level of technical vocabulary and insist that it is spelled correctly. However, in some other subjects, teachers and pupils do not have the same approach or consistently high standards.
- Key stage 4 outcomes in other academic subjects are improving but there are still some weaknesses. For example, some pupils are not reaching the standards they are capable of in history or geography. This is because there is not the same consistently high level of expectation that there is in most other subjects.
- Pupils who join the school with low levels of attainment from other schools are making good progress. They are given work that challenges them, and they respond with a renewed determination to succeed. Pupils with SEND are well supported and make good progress towards their targets from their starting points.
- The most able pupils are not making the progress they should in some subjects. They are often talented performers or athletes and their primary focus is on success in their specialism. The targets teachers set in their academic studies do not reflect their academic ability and, consequently, the most able pupils do not reach the highest academic standards. Some of the most able disadvantaged boys underachieve. Leaders have enlisted the help of the local professional football club that the boys aspire to join to help ensure that this group remains motivated to succeed.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form is now emerging successfully from a significant period of instability. This is because of the strong strategic leadership of the trust, working alongside school leaders to develop and implement a vision that fits the ethos of the school.
- Leaders are developing the sixth-form curriculum to focus on the school's particular strengths and the needs of its students. This is leading to significantly improved outcomes. There is a broad range of vocational courses in the performing arts and sport. This has recently been strengthened further by the addition of an outdoor education facility. The A-level academic curriculum is relatively small. It exists to support those students who wish to augment their specialist vocational course with an academic strand.
- Students on specialist and vocational courses achieve good outcomes. Some reach very high standards that prepare them for a professional career. The standard of practical skills on most courses – particularly in the performing arts – is particularly high. Students demonstrate confidence and fluency in individual movement and the ability to choreograph larger groups. The school won the 2018 National Global Rock Challenge as a result of the quality of its work. Currently, relatively few students undertake academic courses. Their outcomes on these courses are not as high as in other schools.
- Students resitting their GCSEs in English and mathematics make good progress and many achieve at least as well as students in other schools and colleges.
- Standards in some of the theoretical units of work are not as high as in the practical ones. This is because the quality of teaching is not as consistently high. It has led to some underachievement on a minority of courses.
- Students feel well supported by teachers. Their progress is monitored closely, and teachers intervene where necessary. Teachers have an excellent rapport with students, which motivates and enthuses them to do their best. Leaders ensure that elite and high-performing students are well supported so that they can successfully complete their studies while attending competitions and rehearsals.
- Leaders have ensured that the programme of study is good. Students undertake high-quality work experience which is related to their course. Many find placements that support their progress to employment or further study. Students can also gain a range of additional qualifications in coaching and activities. This includes, for example, fitness and conditioning classes and additional voice and music accreditation.
- The vast majority of students progress well to suitable employment or further study. The school has an effective network of links with employers, universities and apprenticeship providers. Teachers offer comprehensive guidance and support to students as they make their career decisions.



## School details

Unique reference number	138385
Local authority	Bournemouth
Inspection number	10086871

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy studio school
Age range of pupils	13 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	458
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	220
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Pat Marchiori
Principal in charge	Nadine Lapskas
Telephone number	01202 578 886
Website	<a href="http://www.leafstudio.co.uk">www.leafstudio.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:studioschool@leafstudio.co.uk">studioschool@leafstudio.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	18–19 November 2014

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school opened in 2013 and joined the Ambitions Academy Trust in 2017.
- The school is a studio school. It specialises in the performing arts and sport.
- The sixth form grew substantially in 2018 because students following sport and outdoor education courses in another sixth form within the trust moved across to the school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the range of subjects and age groups, and scrutinised a wide range of pupils' written work and some videos of performance. Many of the observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including minutes of governors' meetings, development plans, analysis of pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour data, safeguarding documents and the school's review of its own performance.
- Meetings were held with the chief executive officer of the trust and the chair of governors, the principal, senior and middle leaders and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 102 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also considered the responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Andrew Lovett, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Non Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Addison	Ofsted Inspector

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