

# City Academy Norwich

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135904
<b>Local Authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	381957
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alan Alder HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	695
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	35
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dick Palmer
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Brunton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	N/A
<b>School address</b>	Earlham Road Norwich NR4 7NU
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The number of lessons observed was 35 and the number of teachers seen was 33. Meetings were held with groups of students, representatives of the governing body and trustees, as well as with members of staff. Inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at a wide range of documents including those relating to self-evaluation, policies, students' performance data and the safeguarding of students. Questionnaires were received from 83 parents and carers, and inspectors also gathered data from those submitted by students and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the academy's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress currently being made by students in the sixth form.
- How regularly students are attending.
- The quality of the academy's self-evaluation?

## Information about the school

The academy opened in September 2009, occupying the buildings of the predecessor school. Most of the academy's senior leadership team had previously worked in other schools. A new building is being constructed and the academy expects it to be ready for occupation later in the school year.

The academy has a much-higher-than-average proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and this is also the case for students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages or who speak English as an additional language is well-below the national average.

The academy's specialisms are English and digital technology. Its roll is increasing; the academy is becoming more popular with parents.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good academy. Its improvement has been rapid. Students' achievement is improving well and is good. Behaviour is good, classrooms are settled and learning is good. Students' attendance is now satisfactory, and has shown rapid improvement in the last two years. The very small sixth form, however, is inadequate because students last year did not make sufficient progress.

The governing body and the academy's leaders have a clear mission, to create an institution in which students make rapid progress in both their work and their personal development. This mission, a very highly motivated leadership team and staff body and imaginative strategic planning with highly challenging targets, together have enabled the academy to make considerable progress as an institution and students to make good progress as learners.

Much thought is put into improving the academy's work. The improvement of teaching is a major focus. The strategies to improve teaching are proving to be very effective. The quality of teaching is now good, with an increasing proportion of lessons which are outstanding. The progress being made by students is closely monitored and a range of effective strategies is in place to bring about improvement where it is not sufficient. Frequent reviews of provision have identified areas for development, and these too have been improved. For example, the progress of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving well as a result of the changes made. The academy's capacity to improve is good.

There are regular reviews of the effectiveness of subject departments. However, evaluations tend to focus on provision rather than its impact on learning. This can lead to an assumption that because an action is taken, an improvement in learning will occur. This is not always the case, so some minor areas which may require further work are not always quickly identified.

The curriculum has been radically redesigned. It now allows considerable flexibility, and so caters well for the wide range of interests and aspirations of students. A key feature is the mixed-age classes in Years 9 and 10. These classes are organised not on age, but on prior attainment and potential. Whilst it is too early for any firm conclusions to be drawn about their effectiveness, they were well-taught and good learning was taking place in them by all groups. A positive indicator is the much improved attendance of Year 9 students since the launch of this initiative.

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The care, guidance and support provided by the academy has contributed significantly to recent improvements in achievement, attendance and behaviour. All three aspects of the academy's work have shown marked improvement. Students benefit from increasingly well-focused tracking of their progress. The support given to students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, through the academy's own pastoral care systems and through links with local partners, has helped them progress well. Where students have special educational needs and/or disabilities these needs are identified promptly to enable support to be targeted effectively. Well-considered arrangements for students' transition from primary school to the academy develop the students' confidence and help them settle in quickly.

The very small number of students in Year 12 last year made inadequate progress, and the sixth form is therefore judged to be inadequate. In the observations made during the inspection, however, the quality of learning was mostly satisfactory in lessons with nothing that was inadequate. Provision is therefore now satisfactory, though students are too passive in lessons.

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

- Improve sixth form students' attainment and progress by ensuring that they are more actively involved in their learning and are less passive in lessons.
- Take steps to further improve student's attendance rates so they are, within one year, at least as high as the national average.
- Ensure that evaluations focus upon the impact of actions on students' learning, personal development and well-being.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Students' learning and progress are good, as revealed both by the provisional examination results at GCSE, or equivalent, for 2011 and by their current progress in lessons. The proportion of students who gained five or more higher grades, including English and mathematics at GCSE showed a good increase in the last year, exceeding the very challenging targets. The results are now securely above the minimum expected nationally, although they remain significantly-lower-than-average. All groups of students are making good progress. Some, including those who are judged to be gifted or talented are making outstanding progress. Data shows that rates of progress for the most recent Year 11 have accelerated as they have moved through the school. In lessons currently, there remains no difference in the progress made by different groups.

Students' behaviour is good. Classrooms are settled and students behave sensibly at all times. Inspectors saw several examples of students offering help to others. They work productively, both independently and in groups.

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The academy’s leaders and staff are determined to provide a good academic education, but also a good preparation for future life. Students have a good understanding of the attitudes and attributes that are required in the workplace and all gain work experience. The result is that the proportion of students who leave the academy to enter work or some form of training is above average. They are also encouraged to understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle and the success of this is evident in, for example, the high proportion that takes part in sports events outside the timetabled curriculum. Their very positive attitudes towards the academy were revealed both in discussions with inspectors and in their responses to the inspection questionnaire. This is also reflected in the considerable contribution they make to the academy, and indeed to the wider community.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils’ behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Teaching is of good quality. The academy’s good policies on teaching influence most lessons. Questioning, for example, is used well to check students’ understanding and successful steps are taken to improve this where a problem is identified. In very many lessons there are opportunities for students of different ability to tackle work which is most appropriate for them. Most lessons involve a good range of activities and this promotes students’ interest. This is further enhanced by some good use of the academy’s information and communications (ICT) equipment. Some practical lessons in Key Stage 4 are very long and teachers maintain students’ interest and the pace of working, using the time well. Teaching assistants have a marked impact on

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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learning; they are very clear about what support is needed by different students. Their intervention is well-judged so that students are helped to learn: the work is not done for them. A very small minority of lessons were inadequate. This was sometimes because the challenge provided by the content of the lesson, or the manner in which it was being taught, did not take sufficiently into account the abilities of the students concerned.

The curriculum is outstanding. All students follow programmes in English and mathematics that are closely matched to their strengths and weaknesses and this helps them to make good progress. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 provides a good choice of options, including a good range of vocational subjects at two local colleges. Students are motivated by being able to take some GCSE courses in one year. The academy provides an excellent range of opportunities in ICT, in line with its specialism, and students benefit well from the outstanding resources available. There are excellent extra-curricular activities available. These are well-attended and are a source of great enjoyment to students.

Students are cared for well. An overwhelming majority of students who responded to the inspection questionnaire said that they are helped to prepare for the future well and most said that adults explain to them how to improve their work and that teachers are interested in their views. Much has been done, to good effect, to improve attendance. The proportion of students who are persistently absent has fallen rapidly and is now in line with national averages. Partnerships with outside agencies are made very good use of to help students who require specialist support.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The rapid development of the academy is based upon a very clear and strong commitment to improving the education and well-being of the students. The governing body is powerful, well informed and challenges the academy's leaders very well. A lot of well-judged, and at times bold, steps have been taken in pursuit of improvement. The radically reorganised curriculum is an example. There is frequent monitoring of the work of the academy and evaluations are generally very helpful in enabling senior leaders to decide what needs to be improved and how. Initiatives to raise teaching quality are very well led and have resulted in very good improvement. Monitoring of the sixth form has been less effective. Although academy leaders and the governing body were alerted to issues relating to students progress, this did not

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lead to an effective or rapid enough response. The situation in the sixth form nevertheless is now improving and is currently satisfactory.

Academy leaders have analysed in detail how well different groups benefit from provision. So, for example, data on attendance and the uptake of extra-curricular activities as well as the academic progress by the different groups is regularly reviewed to ensure that all are benefiting sufficiently. It is such an analysis that has led to some changes in the provision for students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to good effect. Safeguarding procedures are effective and the academy complies with legal requirements.

Community cohesion is outstanding. The academy’s leaders know the local context of its learners very well. The academy is very active in the local community and its international links have, for example, led to the presence of some students from Spain in classes during the inspection.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Sixth form

A significant number of students failed to make sufficient progress in 2011 and the proportion who have progressed from Year 12 to Year 13 is very small. However, the quality of provision is now satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons well, but the small teaching groups make it difficult for students to learn from, and respond to, the work and ideas of others. The curriculum at present offers exclusively academic subjects at AS or A levels and there are currently few opportunities for students to participate in extra-curricular activities. The academy’s leaders have responded robustly to the identified weaknesses in provision, day-to-day management has been strengthened, target setting and monitoring procedures are now more



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comprehensive and tutors now ensure that students are appropriately qualified for the courses they wish to follow.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account:	4
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

## Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire was slightly lower than the national average. Those that did respond were highly complimentary about the academy. The responses to all the questions are more positive than average and some much more so. Inspection evidence endorses their views.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at City Academy Norwich to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 83 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 730 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	43	42	51	3	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	31	37	50	60	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	27	33	49	59	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	36	45	54	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	33	40	47	57	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	25	30	52	63	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	23	55	66	6	7	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	27	33	49	59	3	4	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	26	31	53	64	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	37	44	53	7	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	23	49	59	5	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	34	51	61	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	35	42	45	54	2	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



23 September 2011

Dear Students

### **Inspection of City Academy Norwich, Norwich, NR4 7NU**

Your academy is successfully helping you to learn well and to develop well as young people. It has improved rapidly since it opened two years ago and is now good. Teaching is good at the academy, and support teachers have a good understanding of how to give help to those of you who need it.

You play an important part in this success. Your behaviour is good, both in class and in and around the buildings. You work hard in lessons and have good, mature relationships with the adults in the academy. Inspectors were impressed by how well you work together in small groups. The academy has been good in involving you in its improvement. Many of you have responded to surveys about, for example, how well you are taught, which have helped to bring about improvement. Behaviour has improved well and your attendance, which was low, is now average.

The Principal and the other leaders, who are very well supported and challenged by the governing body, have made many changes to help you learn better. As a result, for example, the curriculum is outstanding and gives you many opportunities. You also have many opportunities to work with others in other year groups and in the local and international community.

Students in Year 12 last year did not make the progress they should have. Teaching in the sixth form, although it is satisfactory, leads students to learn too passively and needs to be more engaging. Inspectors have given this as an area for the academy to improve. Another area for improvement is to help to improve your attendance so that it is at least as high as the national average. Finally, we have asked academy's leaders to make sure they check on how well the changes they have made are helping you learn and develop. You can help by doing all you can to ensure that attendance continues to improve and that you contribute as much as you can to every lesson.

Yours sincerely

Alan Alder  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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