

City of Norwich School

Eaton Road, Norwich, NR4 6PP

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Gaps in the performance of different groups are not narrowing quickly enough. This is because progress and achievement are not good enough for the students who are supported by the pupil premium funding, those who start school with lower levels of attainment, or students with disabilities and/or special educational needs.
- Teaching requires improvement because, despite a core of high quality teaching, it is not consistently good, and some weaknesses persist.
- Since the last inspection, senior and middle leaders have not focused sharply enough on rapidly improving achievement for the school's most vulnerable students.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching has strengthened since the last inspection and is often good; much is outstanding, particularly in the sixth form.
- Provision and leadership in the sixth form are good. Sixth-form students achieve well and make a very positive contribution to the school as a whole.
- The students' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to their own progress and to everyday life at the school.

Information about this inspection

- This two-day inspection was carried out with half a day's notice.
- Inspectors observed 45 lessons, taught by 45 different teachers, a few of which were observed jointly with the deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors conducted a series of learning walks to evaluate the impact of the school's work to improve teaching and learning.
- A range of documentation was analysed, including that relating to safeguarding, students' progress, attendance, exclusions, behaviour, self-evaluation and systems for managing teachers' performance and improving teaching and learning.
- Inspectors took account of the online Parent View survey, for which there were 233 returns, and also analysed parental responses collated by the school.
- Inspectors took account of 95 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, nominated staff, several groups of students, a representative from the local authority and six governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Paul Brooker, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Stanton	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Yates	Additional Inspector
Martin Wyard	Additional Inspector
Paul Bartlett	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (the additional funding provided by the government to support particular groups of students, including those eligible for free school meals) is below the national figure.
- The proportion of students supported through school action, at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. A few students have a statement of special educational need because they have hearing or sight problems.
- Sixty seven students in Years 10 and 11 attend alternative provision (education provided by other schools or colleges), mostly at the local college where they follow mainly vocational courses for part of the week.
- The school does not make early GCSE entry in either mathematics or English.
- The school meets government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Close the gaps in performance for those students who are most susceptible to underachievement, by ensuring that:
 - they attend regularly and follow courses that are suitably demanding and meet their needs and aspirations
 - planned interventions are timely and highly effective
 - leaders, including governors and curriculum leaders, focus relentlessly on driving higher achievement for all students
 - development planning and school self-evaluation prioritise accelerating progress for these groups.
- Make sure that teaching is consistently good by:
 - ensuring that all teachers plan suitably challenging outcomes for every student and that support, including that provided by learning support assistants, is effectively targeted
 - eradicating inadequate teaching and address the few remaining weaknesses
 - improving the quality and impact of marking.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The school has seen a slight rise in standards at Key Stage 4 since the last inspection, in line with the increases seen nationally. Attainment in both mathematics and English was above the national figure in 2012, but overall standards were broadly average because the school does not use GCSE equivalent qualifications to boost students' average points scores.
- Despite improvement, the school fell short of its target for the proportion of students achieving at least five good GCSEs (including English and mathematics). Given their starting points, GCSE results in 2012 show that students made expected rather than good progress overall, despite good achievement in mathematics, science and humanities subjects.
- The overall increases in 2012 conceal the fact the some groups of students performed significantly less well, and that gaps in achievement have widened since the last inspection. Students eligible for free school meals, for example, achieved a points score of 291 for their 'best eight' subjects, broadly in line with the national figure but too far behind their classmates. Students using off-site provision tend to achieve pass grades, rather than merit or distinction.
- The school recognises that disabled students and those who have special educational needs, students supported by the pupil premium funding and students who started school with the lower attainment all achieve less well than their peers. Suitable steps have been taken to address this issue, but the impact on students' learning and progress is variable: in English there has been an impressive acceleration in progress for these groups, especially in Year 7 with the 'catch-up' programme, but their gains have been more modest in mathematics.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Although there is inevitably some variability in the performance of different subjects, sixth-form students make impressive progress from their starting points and achieve particularly well in Year 13. The quality of learning was good in almost all the 14 sixth-form lessons observed during the inspection, and outstanding in six.
- In Key Stages 3 and 4 the quality of students' learning and progress observed during the inspection was less consistent, because teachers did not always match work to the needs and abilities of their groups. Students made impressive gains when teaching was lively and well planned, but made little or no progress when work was too difficult and unsupported.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Inspectors observed lots of skilful and well-planned teaching, particularly in the sixth form. The strong core of teaching is reflected by the fact that more than half of teachers are on the upper pay scale. However, despite improvements since the last inspection, although much teaching is good or better there is still a small proportion that is inadequate.
- The school was quick to point out to inspectors that some weaknesses observed on the inspection were in lessons taught by supply teachers, and that recent appointments have significantly strengthened teaching. However, there is too much variation in the overall quality of lesson planning, including planning the deployment of additional adults, and the effectiveness of marking.
- The teaching for disabled students and those who have special educational needs requires improvement. Too often teachers and teaching assistants do not focus precisely on what it is that students need to learn, including in intervention sessions and specialist sessions taught for

students who have hearing or sight problems. In one lesson observed the teacher was unaware of which students had particular learning needs.

- In the best lessons teachers set a demanding pace. They hold students' attention for long periods of time with probing questioning and lively discussions, but also give students the opportunity to refine their ideas and deepen their understanding, either by working collaboratively in groups or on their own. This emphasis on developing students' independence is highly successful, particularly in regard to completing homework and when students are expected to be organised and diligent in the sixth form.
- The best teaching is supported by the most effective marking because these teachers are clear about what students have done well, and precisely what they need to improve. However, this is often not the case. In too many books the marking is cursory or ineffective, often because the comments are ignored by the students, and teachers do not check that their guidance is followed.
- In weaker lessons, students made little or no progress because they spent too long on low level tasks or simply copied work from one another when they found it too difficult. Teaching that was inadequate or required improvement lacked urgency, and teachers failed to use the information about how well students are doing to set suitably challenging work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour was consistently good in most lessons observed during the inspection, and staff and students say that this is typical. In the sixth form, students' attitudes to learning are often exemplary.
- In lessons, students are respectful, attentive and sustain their concentration well; low level disruption is uncommon. They follow instructions, stay on task and listen patiently even when teaching is dull and the pace of learning is slow. The way that they listen to one another and respond to others' ideas and opinions is particularly impressive.
- Students' good behaviour is reflected in the fact that there have been very few exclusions to date this year. They say that they feel safe, both at school and when studying off-site.
- The school has a 'zero tolerance' of bullying, and students say that bullying is rare despite some 'name-calling'. Importantly the school monitors bullying very carefully so that any patterns, such as the increased incidence of cyber-bullying seen this year, can be addressed through assemblies and tutorial work. Students recognise different types of bullying, know how to report concerns, and are confident that these will be suitably resolved.
- Students are punctual and most attend well. The school's work with a wide range of agencies is having a positive impact on attendance, which is broadly in line with the national figure. However, levels of persistent absenteeism are above average, and are particularly high for some students with special educational needs.
- Students mature as sensible and responsible young adults and develop skills and personal qualities that prepare them well for the next stage of their education and for adult life. This strong personal development is reflected in the comparatively low number of students who do not stay in education after the age of 16 or secure employment or training.

The leadership and management **requires improvement**

- Senior leaders articulate an ambitious vision, but since the last inspection they have not acted swiftly enough to raise achievement at Key Stage 4. Despite a small rise in standards at Key Stage 4, groups that underachieved in 2011 also made insufficient progress in 2012 and gaps in performance have widened.
- Recently, there has been a much clearer focus on identifying particular student groups, for example in lesson planning and in student progress reviews, and curriculum leaders and House Leaders are alert to the need to check their progress. However, support for these students is inconsistent and accelerating their progress does not figure prominently in the school's development plan, in subject plans or in the regular checks undertaken by curriculum leaders.
- Senior and middle leaders have been successful in improving teaching, and the impact of their work can be seen in the increasing proportion of good or better lessons. Clear expectations are set out in the school's lesson guidance and a lesson planning template that encourages teachers to plan specific activities for identified students in their class. Good practice is routinely shared, for example in Monday morning briefings, and professional development is underpinned by clear performance management which is closely linked to salary progression.
- The school has addressed some of the weaknesses in middle leadership highlighted at the last inspection. New appointments, combined with training and specific support for underperforming subjects, have strengthened the effectiveness of curriculum leadership and leadership of special educational needs. The introduction of the 'dashboard' of student progress information means that curriculum leaders and House Leaders regularly check the progress of all students so that any who are falling behind are quickly identified.
- The school has a number of strategies to engage parents, including a parent forum. Its own surveys show that parents and carers are very positive about its provision. Responses on Parent View are also largely very positive, with 85% of respondents saying that they would recommend the school, but responses here raise some concerns about the flow of information to and from the school.
- The curriculum is sufficiently broad to meet the needs and aspirations of the majority of students, both at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Recent adaptations at Key Stage 3, for example with the 'fresh start' programme in English, have strengthened provision for students with lower starting points. However, results at Key Stage 4 indicate that lower attaining students are not well served by the curriculum, some of which is provided off-site.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly promoted, including in assemblies and in lessons. Teachers encourage students to be reflective and often take the opportunity to discuss social and moral issues, for example in an AS level biology lesson looking at smoking.
- The additional government funding provided through the pupil premium has been allocated to secure the better engagement and achievement of targeted students. Most is assigned to salary costs of key staff, such as the mathematics and English intervention assistants. In addition, funds are sensibly allocated to support intervention programmes and trips and visits ensure that students have equal access to wider enrichment opportunities.
- The local authority knows the school's strengths and provides a proportionate level of support, which the school values. Regular reviews by the intervention adviser are seen as helpful and productive, both in terms of general guidance and specific support for weaker areas. The impact of this work can be seen, for example, in the development of a whole-school approach to marking for literacy and in the recent improvements in the expressive arts department.

However, although the local authority identifies aspects of underperformance, its evaluations of the school over-emphasise improvements. Its prediction that the inspection outcome would be 'good', when there has been such evident underperformance in key groups in 2011 and 2012, was unhelpful because it has not challenged the school sufficiently on aspects of underachievement. Senior leaders and governors say that the governing body provides more challenge than the local authority does.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are knowledgeable and well-informed and provide both challenge and support for senior leaders. They make regular visits, for example through their subject links, so that they can keep up-to-date with developments and hold senior leaders to account.
- The governing body understands its responsibilities in regard to safeguarding and ensures that arrangements are robust. Governors know about the quality of teaching, how performance management is used to strengthen teaching, and how funding for Year 7 'catch up' and from pupil premium is allocated.
- Governors are rightly proud that most students remain in education after the age of 16 or move on to employment or training. However, when evaluating the school's overall effectiveness governors tend to emphasise improvements instead of focusing on weaknesses that need addressing, particularly in regard to the gaps in the performance of different groups of students.

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	121172
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	406003

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
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	1644
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	465
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lucinda Poliakoff
Headteacher	Jim Nixon
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2011
Telephone number	01603 274000
Fax number	01603 274035
Email address	office@cns-school.org

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

