

Admirals Academy

Admirals Way, Thetford, IP24 2JT

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. It has rapidly improved since the academy opened due to a sharper focus on pupils' achievement and good-quality teaching.
- Standards are rising across the academy in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported so that they make good progress. The gap in achievement between those eligible for pupil premium funding and their classmates has narrowed.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the academy is good. This has a positive impact on their learning. The academy works hard to ensure pupils' safety.
- The quality of teaching is good with some that is outstanding. Teachers provide very effective opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills.
- The support and challenge provided by the Academy Transformation Trust, the academy's sponsor, have had a positive impact on achievement, teaching and the particularly strong leadership provided by senior leaders.
- The governing body has led the academy well since it opened. Training has ensured that governors have a good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement.
- All staff demonstrate a clear commitment to raising standards and improving teaching and learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Despite making good and rapidly improving progress, few more-able pupils reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Some lessons do not fully engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm, or provide sufficient challenge for them.
- Teachers have not had sufficient opportunities to learn from other highly effective practitioners.
- The resources for teaching pupils about the uses of new technology are not good enough to support good learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 21 lessons. A number of these were observed jointly with the principal, the vice-principal and the leaders of learning and assessment.
- Meetings and discussions took place with the principal, senior leaders, governors, pupils, staff, and two representatives of the Academy Transformation Trust, the academy’s sponsor.
- Samples of pupils’ work were examined. Some pupils read books with the inspectors.
- The inspectors took account of the 34 responses to the online survey, Parent View, as well as around 160 responses to the academy’s own parental questionnaire.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including data on pupils’ progress and attainment produced by the academy, procedures for safeguarding, the academy’s own evaluations of its work, reports to the governing body and the plans for raising attainment.

Inspection team

Geof Timms, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Margaret Lewis

Additional Inspector

Graham Gossage

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Admirals Academy is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The school opened as an academy under the Academy Transformation Trust in November 2012.
- Most of the pupils are White British. The rest come from largely Portuguese heritages or Eastern European backgrounds. An above average number speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A broadly average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium. This provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in reading, writing, mathematics, particularly for the most able pupils, by:
 - providing pupils with challenging activities that engage their interest and encourage their enthusiasm
 - improving pupils' access to new technology and teachers' skills and knowledge in how best to use it in all subjects
 - providing more opportunities for teachers to observe and work alongside highly effective staff in other schools.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The pupils' attainment when they start at the academy has risen, and this year it was above the level expected for their age. However, the Year 6 pupils who left in 2013 had started with attainment that was below expected levels. The progress they made in Year 6, although rapidly improving, was still insufficient to help pupils fully catch up, especially in mathematics. The academy leaders quickly worked to address this. Training and one-to-one support for the staff improved their skills, and this very quickly ensured that standards rose.
- The current Year 6 pupils are now reaching the standards they are capable of in reading, writing and mathematics. Fewer of these pupils than nationally are working at the higher levels. Even so, the current picture of progress is very positive. Almost all of the pupils in Year 6 are on track to have made the progress expected nationally, and around a third are on track to exceed this by some distance.
- Standards in reading throughout the academy are above average, and pupils read widely and with enjoyment. Year 3 pupils read accurately although some of the less able lack fluency and expression. Pupils' writing skills are good and they write neatly and clearly. Punctuation, spelling and grammar are rapidly improving. This is helping to improve the quality of pupils' writing. In Year 6, for example, pupils used speech marks and adjectival or adverbial clauses well while devising some imaginative retellings of traditional tales.
- Standards in mathematics are above average because of recent improvements to teaching and planning. This has ensured learning builds well on what pupils have previously learned. The academy's data show that during the spring term almost every class made progress that was much better than that expected nationally. In Year 4, for example, pupils rapidly gained knowledge of, and confidence in, working out some complex calculations using money.
- In other subjects there is also evidence of rapidly rising and often above-average standards. In music, pupils gain great confidence and good skills in using a range of percussion. Displays highlight good quality work in design and technology, art and design, history and geography. However, standards in information and communication technology are not high enough because of weaknesses in the resources and gaps in teachers' knowledge, which the academy has plans to address.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive effective extra help, often alongside their classmates, and this is reflected in their current good progress. The pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and those who speak English as an additional language, make good and often rapid progress in learning English that supports their learning in other subjects.
- The academy is ensuring any gap between the attainment of pupils supported through the pupil premium funding and their classmates is closing. Currently the vast majority are making expected progress and a good proportion are exceeding it. In the current Year 6 for example, eligible pupils are ahead of their peers in reading, while at the same level in mathematics. A gap of around a term remains in writing.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved rapidly since the academy opened. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress. The academy is working hard to ensure that more teaching is outstanding.

- Effective teaching in reading, writing and mathematics results in good progress. The way teachers encourage pupils to talk and explain their learning is a major strength throughout the academy. This leads to high quality speaking and listening skills. However, the teaching of information and communication technology is not as successful because the current equipment is not adequate for the effective teaching of computing and teachers' skills and knowledge are not well developed enough.
- Teachers have created good conditions for positive and purposeful learning in classrooms. This is largely due to the support and challenge provided by the Academy Transformation Trust alongside senior leaders. Staff have not yet had enough opportunities to observe, learn from and work alongside highly effective teachers, either in the Trust or in other schools.
- The teachers are making much better use of data on pupils' progress. This is now reviewed within year groups and with senior leaders on a very regular basis. Because of this teachers have a good understanding of the progress made by groups and individuals in their classes, and especially pupils who are being helped to reach specific levels and those eligible for the pupil premium.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught effectively, often within classrooms. At times small groups work outside classrooms, or teachers or teaching assistants work on a one-to-one basis with a particular pupil. This is designed to meet the pupils' specific needs and its success is evident in the progress made.
- The marking of pupils' work is good. They talk about how the marking helps them understand how to improve their work, and they often respond well. In one Year 6 lesson the teacher discussed with one pupil how well she had reacted to the marking of her previous piece of work and how, because of this, her current piece of work was of higher quality.
- The work of teaching assistants is particularly effective. Three of the current teaching assistants are due to start training to be teachers next year. They provide very effective help for all pupils, especially those who find learning more difficult. They work very well together with teachers so they are aware of and understand lesson planning and what is expected of them. In one music lesson, for example, a teaching assistant provided very effective support not only in managing pupils but also in supporting and extending their skills.
- There are occasions when teachers do not provide work that is interesting or challenging enough for all of the pupils. This is especially the case for some of the most able pupils when they are given tasks that do not extend their learning sufficiently. At times lesson activities are not sufficiently stimulating, and as a result pupils lack concentration or a clear focus on the given tasks.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of the pupils is good. In most lessons observed, the vast majority of pupils were well behaved and showed positive attitudes to learning. This is having a major impact on their rapidly improving learning and progress. Pupils talk positively about how they thoroughly enjoy their work. Other evidence shows this behaviour is typical.
- A small number of pupils find it difficult to conform to the academy's high expectations. When this happens, teachers and leaders follow appropriate procedures and the academy's clear systems for rewards and sanctions. Extremely comprehensive records of any incidents are kept.

Where exclusions have been necessary they have been largely successful and have not needed to be repeated.

- Pupils talk openly about the lessons and other aspects of academy life they enjoy, such as the clubs and visits. Older pupils explained that they felt well prepared for secondary education and felt there was little about the academy that they would change.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe, and parents confirm this view. The academy provides a good range of activities to help pupils learn to stay safe, through activities run by local emergency services such as the 'Crucial Crew'. Pupils' knowledge of how to use new technology, such as the internet or mobile phones, safely is less secure. Even so, all safeguarding requirements are met.
- The pupils say bullying is rare and they are confident if it occurred it would be effectively dealt with. The support for pupils facing a range of challenging circumstances is effective, and case studies show these pupils making good progress. The breakfast and after-school club has ensured that pupils who attend have a calm and productive start and end to the day.
- Attendance has improved to broadly average as a result of the academy's strong and successful focus on monitoring and addressing any persistent absenteeism. The majority of parents appreciate the importance of full attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The senior leaders' leadership is outstanding. Their highly effective tracking of pupils' progress and use of this information to support and challenge teachers has had a major impact on the rapidly rising standards. Other leaders are developing their skills and the leaders of most subjects and year groups are beginning to have a positive impact on the teaching and learning.
- These improvements are the result of regular meetings between teachers and leaders at which the progress of all pupils is discussed and analysed in detail. If necessary for improving progress, modified targets are drawn up and further monitoring takes place.
- The principal and the other senior leaders have ensured that all staff have a clear ambition to do the best they can for the pupils at the academy, and this is shared with the governing body. The pupils' rapidly improving progress and the good quality of teaching show the academy has the capacity to achieve this goal: to become outstanding.
- The academy's self-evaluation summary is accurate, and identifies what remains to be done to improve further. The resulting improvement planning is detailed and is based on the appropriate priorities. The training then provided for teachers is linked closely to identified needs. For example, the weakness in mathematics was quickly addressed through training and consultancy, and teachers talk very positively about how useful and successful this has been.
- The detailed monitoring of teaching and pupils' learning is carried out by senior and subject leaders. They do this in a very efficient and effective way, using direct observations but also the examination of pupils' work, discussions with pupils and the use of data. Teachers have not yet had enough opportunities to observe, work with and learn from other highly effective practitioners to further develop their skills.
- The Academy Transformation Trust, the academy's sponsor, has provided very effective and regular support since the process of conversion. Training for all staff and governors,

opportunities to meet staff from other academies, and support and challenge from external consultants have all been very effective in developing successful leaders. Data are regularly checked by the Trust and the academy is challenged to maintain and build further on its good and improving status.

- Funding available through the pupil premium is used to help eligible pupils to take a full part in academy life and to benefit, where appropriate, from specific resources and additional help from adults. The impact of this work is evident in the narrowing of the gap in achievement, and the progress made by these pupils is monitored closely by leaders.
- The extra funding available to promote physical education and sporting opportunities is used appropriately, with a focus on increasing participation in a number of sporting activities. External coaches are used to add their expertise to that available on the staff. Because of this work, the pupils are experiencing a wider range of sporting opportunities, the success of which the academy is yet to evaluate.
- The subjects taught provide pupils with a wide range of interesting activities. The academy is preparing well for the changes to the planning and organisation that will be needed when a more thematic approach is used to teach subjects from next year. A good range of additional activities such as clubs and team sports add to pupils' enjoyment and promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the conversion to academy status, the governing body has improved the way it holds the academy to account through a good level of support and challenge. Focused training has given governors a better understanding of how to use data to check pupils' progress, and how to ensure their safety.
 - Governors check the academy's work, including the quality of teaching, in detail through a range of visits, the outcomes of which are reported to the other governors. They hold regular meetings with, and receive reports from, the principal.
 - The governors have a good understanding of the system used to determine teachers' effectiveness in enabling pupils to make progress. Decisions about teachers' pay are appropriately linked to performance and responsibilities.
 - Governors track finances well and help in deciding how to spend additional money, such as the pupil premium and sports funding.

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	138919
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	440035

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	323
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane James
Principal	Theresa Rogers
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01842 753993
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