

The Nicholas Hamond Academy

Brandon Road, Swaffham, PE37 7DZ

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

- This is a rapidly improving school. Much of the improvement can be attributed to the decisive and determined leadership provided by the academy's Principal.
- Students make good progress from their starting points. GCSE results are predicted to improve further this summer.
- Teaching is at least good and some is outstanding. Leaders have had a positive impact on improving teaching in all subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Students feel safe and say that the academy is improving rapidly. Their behaviour is good and attendance is above average.
- A most thoughtful and innovative range of learning opportunities is contributing to students' improving results, especially in literacy and numeracy. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at least good.
- The sixth form is good. It is developing well and more students are planning to enter.
- Senior leaders, governors and senior staff from the sponsoring trust assiduously monitor the academy's work. Careful and detailed monitoring is helping to improve achievement for all students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking and the written feedback given to students are not consistently effective in enabling them to improve their work.
- The progress students make in developing their writing skills is sometimes restricted because teachers do not provide enough opportunities for students to write at length.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook 24 classroom observations involving 22 different teachers.
- The opportunities to undertake lesson observations in Years 11 and 12 were limited because many students were sitting public examinations.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, other governors, senior members of the academy’s sponsoring trust, five different groups of students, many staff including the Principal, senior managers and heads of departments.
- Too few responses were made to the online survey (Parent View) to be statistically reliable.
- Inspectors took account of the 48 responses received to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at samples of students’ past and present work and scrutinised various documents. These included: the academy’s checks on how well it is doing, its planning, extensive information on students’ academic progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance, punctuality and safeguarding.
- Inspectors evaluated the impact of additional funding, such as the pupil premium and Year 7 ‘catch-up’ funding.

Inspection team

Bill Stoneham, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Genevieve Usher	Additional Inspector
Matthew Grantham	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is far smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It became an academy on 1 November 2012 sponsored by the Academy Transformation Trust.
- The current Principal took up her post in September 2012.
- Most students are of a White British heritage. The proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government to help students known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after students) is above average.
- Fifty-eight Year 7 students, from a year group of 130, are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding, which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Students' additional needs are mainly behavioural, emotional, social or moderate learning difficulties.
- The academy received its first set of GCSE results in August 2013.
- The academy meets the current government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4.
- Since the formation of the academy, there have been many staff changes and staffing is now stable.
- The academy does not use any off-site alternative learning providers.
- The academy devises its own curricular programmes. These include: the Discimus programme, which is project-based learning followed by students of different ages working together to complete 12 assessed assignments each year on topics such as: chocolate, fish and festivities. The Icenii programme gives support to those with particularly low skills in English and mathematics.
- Many more students than is usual nationally join the academy during term time. Some students have a parent stationed locally at a major military base.
- At the start of the current academic year, sixth form provision was introduced. Numbers are small and no external examinations have yet been taken. Most students are following AS- or A-level courses, with a minority following Level 2 vocational courses.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently outstanding, by:
 - ensuring that all staff provide students with clear, written feedback on their work so that it is clear what level has been achieved, what has been done well, what is needed to improve it and how improvements can be secured
 - checking that students correct the errors identified in marking of their work
 - ensuring staff encourage students to develop their skills in writing formally, in different styles and for different audiences.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- On entry to Year 7, students' attainment is well-below average overall. All groups of students make good progress from their starting points, but fewer gained five or more GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, in the summer of 2013 than did so nationally.
- Detailed monitoring data provided by the academy indicate that results are predicted to rise in this year's examinations. Current Year 11 students are on track to reach challenging targets. A small number have already gained at least a Grade C in GCSE English through early entry. However, the academy has discontinued the practice of early entry to GCSE examinations to enable students to benefit from following the full course. Students who join during term time settle in quickly and make good progress in line with that of others.
- Extra funds from the Year 7 catch-up funding are used most effectively to support students with below-average skills in literacy and numeracy. Students following the academy's own Icení programme in Year 7 make outstanding progress in their work. Most are disabled students and those who have special educational needs and a high proportion are statemented. For some, their progress has been so rapid that they have been reintegrated into mainstream English and/or mathematics classes.
- Though most improve their literacy skills as they move through the academy, the opportunities for students to hone their writing skills are not consistently applied across all subjects.
- The progress of students eligible for pupil premium funding is closely checked. In 2013, the attainment of eligible students in Year 11 in English and mathematics was over half a GCSE grade below that of their peers. The academy's data indicate that this gap is closing. The additional funding is being used well to ensure gaps in performance are narrowed.
- Disabled students, those who have special educational needs and the few who speak English as an additional language all achieve well, making progress similar to that of their peers. They receive good support from their teachers and teaching assistants.
- More-able students achieve well. Higher attainers respond well to the opportunities provided to pursue excellence in gymnastics, guitar playing and participating in competitions such as the World Stock Exchange Challenge.
- Sixth form students say that they enjoy their courses and that their work is challenging. Their progress is carefully monitored. Students following AS-level courses and those following Level 2 vocational courses are making good progress in relation to their starting points. Care is also taken to ensure that those sixth formers who have not gained at least a C grade in English and/or mathematics are given every opportunity to reach this level. Student numbers are projected to at least double from their present level by the start of the next academic year.

The quality of teaching is good

- The consistently good progress made by students, including in English and mathematics, and the improving standards seen by inspectors confirm that teaching is of a consistently good quality.
- Students, including sixth formers, praise the quality of teaching.

- Good teaching enables students, including those for whom English is an additional language and those eligible for extra funding through the pupil premium, to make good progress in their literacy skills and especially their reading and writing. A range of students was heard reading well and with confidence. Good quality written work was seen in a range of subjects including English and French.
- However, not all teachers constantly challenge students to develop their literacy skills, especially their skills in writing. Opportunities to encourage students of all abilities to write formally, using sentences, and in different styles are not always exploited.
- Most teaching is effective and students' learn rapidly. Teachers know the students well, and plan challenging learning for all abilities, including the more able.
- Art, food technology and physical education are very well taught. For example, the students gained much from challenging teaching to advance their knowledge and understanding of these subjects. Learning was rapid because the students had the confidence and skills to apply their knowledge and develop the standard of their work. In each subject, all students were fully engaged and reacted well to the advice and guidance provided by teachers. Consequently, all students made rapid progress. The enthusiasm of the students was a further notable feature that contributed significantly to their successful learning.
- Although most staff mark students' work regularly, the quality of the written feedback provided is variable and is not consistent both within and across subjects. Even when teaching is good, marking can lack precision. Where marking is most effective, staff annotate students' work in a way that indicates what has been done well, what needs to be improved with advice about how improvements can be secured. This good practice is, however, not yet universal. Some teachers do not consistently offer sufficient advice on how to improve, nor do they check that students have acted on the guidance given.
- The sixth form is well taught and students' progress is carefully monitored. Sixth form work is marked well and students are given helpful written advice on how to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. This is a happy and harmonious academy, with many smiling faces. Students are successfully encouraged to work and socialise together. Older students spoke with obvious pride about improvements in behaviour in the academy. They said that the academy is a good place at which to study.
- Students, including those in the sixth form, have positive attitudes to learning and these are a key factor contributing to their good academic success. The vast majority of students attend school with a desire to learn.
- Strong and mutually respectful relationships are a feature of all aspects of the academy's work. Behaviour is managed well by staff. Students said that bullying, of any description, is rare; if any incidents are reported, staff take swift and effective action.
- Exclusion rates are very low and have fallen since the academy's inception. Over this same period, attendance, including in the sixth form, has risen to levels that significantly exceed the latest recorded national average for secondary schools.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students of all ages said

that they feel totally safe. Leaders make sure that access to the academy is secure and that staff are only appointed following rigorous checks on their suitability.

- Students know the dangers of cyber bullying, and e-safety is given a high priority. Students are informed about all aspects of bullying and its consequences. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the dangers of bullying grounded in religious, cultural and sexual intolerance. Much is done to ensure that discrimination, in whatever form, is not tolerated.
- Many students are bussed daily to and from the academy. The end of the academy day was extremely well controlled. Many buses were parked on the academy site, but students were observed to act with commendable good sense when boarding. There was no running between vehicles. Though staff were present, they had no need for them to intervene to ensure students' safety. All students are carefully tutored about how to stay safe in these circumstances.
- The academy offers its students good opportunities to take on responsibility and charity work is an important aspect of academy life. Partnership work is good. Students participate in many local events. For example, art students recently made a significant contribution to a local art exhibition. Such opportunities enliven the students' educational experiences and also ensure that the promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at least good.

The leadership and management are good

- This academy is in transition. Its success is being transformed by the astute and inspirational leadership of its excellent Principal. In her quest for excellence in teaching and achievement, she is ably supported by her senior team, by her middle managers and by staff at all levels.
- Many subject leaders are relatively new to their posts and some are lacking in experience. However, through the training they are given and the valuable experience they are gaining, they are improving rapidly; they make a valuable contribution to the academy's improvements.
- The academy's transformation is helped and supported by its experienced governing body and the strong and effective support offered by the highly knowledgeable and skilled staff deployed by the academy's sponsors. The academy chain has ensured that governors are well equipped to hold leaders to account for the academy's performance. As a result, students' achievements are rising at a good pace.
- Staff morale is exceptionally high. Many positive comments were received from staff about leadership. Staff views about the transformation in progress are suitably summarised by the following comment: 'Throughout the academy's life, there has been a remarkable change in quality. I am proud to be part of the academy's journey.'
- The academy's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance are detailed, thorough and effective. They inform its plans for the future and underpin the many improvements.
- The leadership of teaching and its impact on learning are good. Leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate and the provision for staff training is integral to ensuring that standards are improving and that further improvements are secured.
- Students in all years, including the sixth form, are offered an appropriate range of subjects to study. Additional activities are planned very well and are integral in raising standards. Academy Team Time set aside at the end of the working day, and other successful initiatives to accelerate

students' progress, such as the academy's own Icenii and Discimus programmes, encourage cooperation and improve students' key skills, especially communication. These initiatives make a major contribution to their academic and personal achievement. The horticulture work that some Year 7 students are undertaking as part of one of these study programmes is especially innovative and doing much to ensure that a group of students who find school a struggle are able to learn well in a markedly different environment. Students have enjoyed studying themes as diverse as: fish, chocolate, festivities and cowboys and indians.

- Staff provide a range of activities beyond the timetable in art, drama, music and sport for students to follow. This very well-planned initiative stimulates interest in many activities, as well as allowing more-able and talented students to pursue their interests to a higher level.
 - Curricular initiatives successfully promote equal opportunities for all to succeed. They make a significant contribution to developing interest in learning, raising confidence and boosting skills in reading, writing, communication and numeracy. As one student who had special educational needs commented: 'The school has given me the confidence to be the best I can.'
 - Students' progress is closely tracked. All students, including those in the sixth form, are set academic targets. Progress towards these targets is monitored regularly and swift intervention is arranged when necessary.
 - Viable post-16 provision has been established in a short time, reflecting good leadership. Students are appreciative of what is on offer and the good arrangements for careers guidance help to ensure that their planning for higher education or employment is sound.
 - The academy has improved considerably in a comparatively short time. Standards are rising at a good rate, behaviour and attendance have improved considerably, student morale is high and staffing is stable. The academy is very well led and the Principal and all staff are eager to secure further improvements. In this desire, they are extremely well supported by the governing body and by the academy's sponsors. The academy's impressive track record indicates that a strong capacity for further improvement has been created.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The academy's improvement owes much to the quality of its governing body and the support staff provided by the sponsors. Both groups are highly supportive of the Principal and staff and the action they undertake. The governors and sponsors analyse outcomes thoroughly and their understanding of data on students' attainment and progress enables them to provide challenge, rigour and advice to leaders. Academy finances are managed well, with regular checks to ensure that finances are allocated prudently and to the benefit of the students. Governors make sure that the pupil premium is used well and enables eligible students to achieve more. They know what the quality of teaching is and how the many recent staff changes have benefited the academy and ensured rising standards. They are fully involved in the performance management of staff and ensure that when staff progress up the pay scale the additional reward is linked to the quality of their performance in enabling students to achieve well. Arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements.

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	138918
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	440034

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	550
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Beech
Principal	Cheryl Hill
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01760 721480
Fax number	01760 721269
Email address	office@tnha.org.uk

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