

Newport Free Grammar School

Bury Water Lane, Newport, Saffron Walden, CB11 3TR

Inspection dates 3–4 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Students do not yet make good enough progress from their starting points, which are often high. Gaps in the performance of students from different groups are too great.
- Progress and achievement are not good enough for the students who are supported by pupil premium funding.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good. There is too much variation in the quality of teaching between and within subject areas.
- Marking in books and the quality of assessment are too variable. Students are not consistently provided with written comments about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.
- The planned improvements and changes to staffing and leadership structures, while well underway, have yet to show sufficient impact on outcomes for students.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's drive and ambition for the students is at the heart of the improvement seen in the academy over the past fourteen months.
- Teaching has strengthened and the proportion of good and outstanding teaching is increasing.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress as the result of effective teaching.
- The students' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to their progress.
- The governing body is robust in holding leaders to account for the academy's performance.

Information about this inspection

- This two day inspection was carried out with half a day’s notice.
- Inspectors undertook observations of teaching in 39 lessons, and parts of other lessons during a series of learning walks around the school, some of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- 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 on-line Parent View survey, for which there were 96 responses and also analysed parental responses collated by the school.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, nominated staff, several groups of students, a representative from the local authority and three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body.

Inspection team

Rachel De Souza, Lead inspector

Associate Inspector

Paul Brooker

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Jennifer Mullett-Waller

Additional Inspector

Patrick O’Dwyer

Additional Inspector

*** Appointed as an Additional Inspector, under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Schedule 12 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006.*

Full report

Information about this school

- Newport Free Grammar School became an academy in October 2012. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected in May 2012 its overall effectiveness was judged satisfactory.
- The academy is an average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- Most students are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government to support pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care) is below the national average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is below the national figure, but the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- No students are currently accessing alternative provision.
- Sixth form provision is delivered by the academy on site.
- The academy does not now make early entry in either mathematics or English except in exceptional cases.
- The academy meets government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that teaching is consistently good or outstanding by ensuring that:
 - lessons provide enough challenge so that all students can make rapid progress
 - the features of outstanding teaching are shared across and within all subject areas
 - homework is planned carefully to extend and consolidate students' learning
 - teachers take responsibility for developing students' skills in reading and writing by providing opportunities to read more widely and write at length in all subjects.
- Accelerate students' progress further by making sure that:
 - all teachers use assessment information to set suitably challenging targets for all individuals and groups of students
 - marking steers the improvement of students' more effectively
 - development planning prioritises closing the gaps in performance and accelerating progress for those students most susceptible to underachievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because the academy's GCSE results in 2013 were not good enough in some key subjects. The proportions of students making the expected progress in English and mathematics were broadly in line with those found nationally, but this was not the case in a number of subjects, including modern foreign languages and science.
- The academy's data indicates a marked improvement, with results in 2014 set to rise. However, the quality of students' learning is too variable, both within and particularly between subjects. Students do not yet make consistently good progress.
- Students achieve well in the sixth form and make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Since last summer, steps have been taken to address disparities in performance and raise standards. Evaluations of students' work and school data confirm improvements, but observations indicate that the quality of learning is still very variable.
- Literacy is not well enough supported in all subjects although there are examples of some strong practice, particularly in English.
- The academy has developed and is now applying a significantly improved system of data tracking to monitor students' progress. Any groups or individuals who are at risk of underachieving are quickly spotted and given additional support.
- Over the course of this year, the disparities in the performance of different groups of students are narrowing. This is primarily because of better teaching and the sharper use of data to spot underperformance.
- Students for whom the academy receives pupil premium funding underachieved in 2013 because they made poor progress in English and mathematics. Only 33% of these students made expected progress in English, leaving them more than a year behind their peers. This year the gaps have narrowed dramatically because 80% are on track to make expected progress in English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has strengthened since the academy opened, with an increasing proportion that is typically good and some that is outstanding. However, while there is high quality teaching across a range of subjects, there remains too much variability both within and across subject areas. Too much teaching requires improvement.
- Where teaching requires improvement planning is not precise enough and learning lacks urgency. This is usually because the teachers do not expect enough from their students, either in their attitudes or in the quality of their work. Students will, for example, take great care with written work in one subject but be lackadaisical in another. Teachers fail to use the information about how well students are doing to set suitably challenging work. Homework tasks are not set consistently; in some cases hurried homework tasks are inadequately explained and not given due importance.

- The marking and assessment of students' work is far too variable and often ineffective; comments are routinely ignored by the students, particularly when teachers' guidance is too vague to be helpful. The most effective marking makes clear what students have done well and what they need to improve.
- The academy has developed and is now applying a significantly improved system of data tracking to monitor students' progress. Any groups or individuals who are at risk of underachieving can be quickly spotted and given additional support.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good because teachers use their subject expertise to present challenging work to extend students' learning.
- The most effective learning is supported by skilful questioning and sharply focused marking which extends students and enables them to develop and build on what they already know and can do.
- Students make exceptional progress where teaching is outstanding. This is most evident when teachers use their detailed assessments of students' aptitudes to set very high expectations and then plan and prepare activities that stretch and challenge the students, often using a variety of resources to engage the whole group. In a Year 9 music lesson, students were launched straight into a challenging group task that required close collaboration and concentration. As well as being fun, the performance piece enabled students to work out the features of minimalistic music for themselves by applying and sharing their excellent prior learning to the new context.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour is good. Students treat one another with consideration and respect, and behave very well at break periods throughout the day. The academy's records show that, over time, the incidence of unacceptable behaviour is significantly reduced.
- Most students behave impeccably well in lessons. For the vast majority of students, their positive attitudes to learning are an important factor in their learning. In lessons, there are strong and positive relationships between adults and students, and between students themselves. As a result, students feel confident expressing their opinions and asking questions. Students want to do well and succeed in their lessons.
- Students develop personal qualities that prepare them well for the next stage of their education and adult life, and the extensive range of enrichment activities supports this. They are proud of the school's heritage and the distinct opportunities it offers. Students appreciate the improvements that the academy's new leadership, particularly the headteacher, has brought about. Sixth form students speak very positively about their experiences, and feel they are able to make a wide contribution to life in the academy.
- Students are punctual and attend well.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Safeguarding is a priority for the academy and there are robust systems in place. Detailed attention is paid to all aspects of safeguarding. Students say that they feel well supported and safe at the academy.
- Students are alert to bullying in all its guises, including cyber-harassment and homophobic

bullying. They talk knowledgably and confidently about potential dangers and how to avert and address them. Students recognise that bullying happens, but are confident that any issues that they raise are properly resolved.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership and has won the confidence of the students. He has successfully prioritised improvements in the quality of teaching and standards and behaviour. He has focused relentlessly on strengthening classroom teaching and ensuring a consistent understanding of how to use data to improve students' progress.
- Leadership at all levels is developing, with subject leaders now taking responsibility for improving teaching and raising student achievement within their faculties. Senior leaders ensure that all middle leaders understand their roles and check closely that quality assurance work is carried out effectively. The leadership in the sixth form is good.
- The academy's self-evaluation is very thorough and accurate. Senior leaders know what the academy needs to do to improve further. In order to do this, the academy has appointed a mainly new leadership team for September into suitably restructured roles.
- Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching thoroughly and use their findings to plan good quality professional development for teachers. This monitoring indicates that the quality of teaching has improved since the academy opened, but recognises that teaching remains too variable. The academy has developed plans to address this as a priority.
- The academy has clear-cut arrangements to review the performance of teachers, to tackle under-performance, to reward those who teach effectively and support others so that they improve. The academy has inherited an experienced teaching staff, a large proportion of whom are on the upper pay scale. For others, salary progression is tied to evidence of their successful achievement of targets for their performance.
- The curriculum is of high quality and is evolving sensibly to match the needs of all its students. The main curriculum is enhanced by a wide and impressive variety of extra-curricular activities. Enrichment opportunities are plentiful, particularly in music and sport, including trips abroad such as an upcoming hockey trip to South Africa.
- The academy promotes students' personal development very well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, in tutor time and in lessons. This is supported by the wide range of enrichment activities, particularly sporting activities and cultural opportunities. Students develop a sense of social responsibility and an appreciation of the beliefs and values of others. They are routinely encouraged to take on leadership and other responsibilities.
- Parents are generally positive about the academy. They are well-informed by the academy's website.
- Governors are well informed about how pupil premium is used to support students and hold the academy to account for the impact of this expenditure.
- The academy is well supported and challenged by the local authority improvement advisor who has judiciously brokered strong ongoing support for the school from local teaching school alliances. Her challenge and support is highly valued by the academy.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body fulfils its responsibilities in regard to safeguarding and ensures that arrangements meet all statutory requirements.
- The governing body has been significantly restructured since becoming an academy. It has streamlined its committees and membership to meet the needs of the academy. The governing body provides effective challenge and is well informed about the academy. Governors know about the quality of teaching, how performance management is used to strengthen teaching, and the allocation and impact of pupil premium expenditure. Governors have a good grasp of performance data and use their detailed knowledge of this to provide suitable support and challenge for senior leaders, as necessary.

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	138734
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	427180

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	960
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Gray
Headteacher	Gordon Farquhar
Date of previous school inspection	30 May 2012
Telephone number	01799 540237
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