

City Academy Norwich

299 Bluebell Road, Norwich, NR4 7LP

Inspection dates 24–25 March 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The results gained by students in their GCSE examinations do not reach the minimum standard set by the government.
- GCSE results are not high enough, compared to other subjects in core science and history.
- Previously students have been entered early for GCSE examinations in too many subjects. As a result, they have not done as well as they should.
- Students who enter the academy with below-average attainment do not make as much progress as other students.
- Disadvantaged students are not catching up fast enough with other students nationally or in the academy.
- Attendance is still too low and too many students have very low levels of attendance.
- Teaching is not consistently good across the academy.
- Marking varies too much both in style and quality. As a result, students are not always sure how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.
- The academy does not develop students' spiritual and cultural awareness as well as it does their moral and social understanding.
- A small number of teachers do not manage behaviour well in their lessons.
- Senior leaders have not held those in charge of attendance, exclusions and support for disadvantaged students sufficiently to account for the impact of their work.

The school has the following strengths

- The Principal has driven rapid improvements since she started in January 2015. There is a relentless focus on ensuring the current Year 11 students achieve the results they are capable of.
- Improvements were made from 2013 to 2014 in the headline GCSE results and some other subjects, particularly physical education.
- The curriculum has been broadened for GCSE examinations so that more students are taking the right mix of academic or work-related courses.
- There is effective provision for a range of students with particular needs.
- Students who speak English as an additional language achieve well because they are highly motivated to learn.
- The governors, supported and strengthened by the Trust, have made effective appointments including the new Principal as well as new leaders for English and mathematics. They challenge more effectively than they did in the past.
- The academy has strong and effective links with other providers and makes good use of being adjacent to both the City College Norwich and the University.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the academy's documents on safeguarding, the view of its own performance and plans for future improvement. They also looked at the academy's information about how well students are doing and its records relating to teaching, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors observed learning in 33 lessons and visited tutor periods. Five lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders from the academy. Inspectors spoke with students in lessons and looked at their books. They observed and talked with students at breaks and lunchtimes and as they moved around the academy.
- Discussions were held with four groups of students about how well they are doing in different subjects and to gather their views on behaviour and safety in the academy.
- Discussions were also held with senior and subject leaders in the academy, the teacher from the local authority who is in charge of The Deaf Resource base within the academy and the manager in charge of 'The Hub', a separate but on-site alternative provision managed by the academy.
- In addition, discussions were also held with three governors, a representative of the sponsor, the Transforming Education in Norfolk Group (TEN) and the academy's improvement partner.
- Inspectors considered the 29 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. In addition, inspectors met with three parents and spoke to a further parent by telephone.
- A British Sign Language interpreter accompanied inspectors during the first morning of the inspection.

Inspection team

Anne Pepper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Carol Evatt

Additional Inspector

Michael Stanton

Additional Inspector

Jeffery Plumb

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average.
- It used to have a sixth form but there are currently no students in the sixth form to report upon.
- The academy opened on 1 September 2009. From 2012, the sponsor has been the TEN Group. The TEN Group is a federation of educational institutions in Norfolk. The main partners in this federation are: City College Norwich, Norfolk Teacher Training Centre, Norfolk Academies Multi-Academy Trust (which sponsors four other Norfolk academies) and the University Technical College, Norfolk.
- The large majority of students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is just below average. A small minority of students are from Eastern Europe. There are a few students linked to parents having placements at the university who do not stay at the academy for the whole of their secondary education.
- The proportion of disabled students or those who have special educational needs is well above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. This additional funding is given to schools for students who are looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Seven students are educated partly off-site, attending one day a week at the City College Norwich or Eastern College, and a small number of students are educated wholly off-site, for three weeks in an alternative provision called the Short Stay School for Norfolk.
- In addition the academy runs an on-site alternative provision, 'The Hub', where nine students are currently attending some full-time and some part-time. Twelve students currently attend the Eaton Vale Outdoor Centre one day a week for personal and leadership development.
- There is a 'specially resourced provision for DSEN' within the academy for seven deaf students aged 11 to 16 students, which is managed by the local authority (The Deaf Resource base). The students spend most of their time in mainstream classes with specialist support.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all groups of students make good progress by:
 - making sure teachers adapt learning to suit the needs of lower-attaining students
 - improving the provision for disadvantaged students
 - adopting a clear marking policy that is focused on students' work improving over time and sets out high expectations both for students' work and for teachers' marking.
- Improve leadership, including governance, so that staff at all levels are held accountable for student outcomes by making sure that:
 - all teachers take responsibility for students' behaviour in their classrooms through consistent and effective use of the academy's behaviour policy
 - teachers promote students' spiritual and cultural awareness as well as their moral and social understanding
 - leaders spend the pupil premium directly on supporting disadvantaged students and measure the impact of this to ensure their progress accelerates
 - standards increase in history and core science
 - leaders take steps to improve attendance, especially among students who are the most absent, including widening the number of staff tackling attendance issues.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The academy has not maintained the previous good levels of achievement and behaviour. GCSE results fell sharply in 2013 and, while improving slightly in 2014, have not yet reached the current government floor standards. Until more recently, governors were not taking the robust actions needed to secure leadership that could bring the improvements needed in teaching, and in behaviour.
- Senior leaders are not held sufficiently accountable for specific outcomes such as attendance, exclusions or the performance of disadvantaged students. The academy has just begun consultation on a restructuring of posts. There is much more to do to complete this process and for it to show the rapid and sustained improvements needed in attendance, behaviour and GCSE results.
- The new Principal has quickly gained the confidence of governors, the Trust, staff, students and parents. She has made rapid changes in the academy to bring GCSE results up to an acceptable level. This has not been an easy task but her clarity on what needs to happen now, as well as over the next term, has galvanised everyone towards achieving this main initial outcome.
- Staff and students recognise the positive changes that have occurred since the new Principal joined the academy. The clear emphasis is on everyone taking personal responsibility. One student, who spoke to inspectors said, 'She has changed everything and it is mostly dependent on us, not the teachers.' Staff also spoke clearly about a change in expectations to promote responsibility in students and accountability in teachers, for example for the behaviour in their classrooms. However, this is not secure across the academy.
- Some students, particularly those in Year 11 and some parents, have found the speed and intensity of the changes difficult. A recent consultation with parents over changes to the timings of the academy day, led to some confusion until the timings were clarified. From the small number of responses to Parent View, the majority of parents would recommend the academy to others.
- The lack of a sixth form has come about as a result of falling rolls for secondary students in the local area together with an over-supply of post-16 places. Governors have decided that there will be no post-16 admissions in September 2015 and September 2016. In the autumn of 2016, governors will review the situation and consider if it is feasible for post-16 admissions to restart in September 2017.
- The range of subjects and courses offered is broad and balanced. It improved in 2013 and 14 due to a stronger emphasis placed on the most-able students taking a range of academic of GCSE subjects. Lower-attaining students took more work-related courses allowing them to progress to further study. However, the legacy of early entry and one-year GCSE courses in Years 9, 10 and 11 meant that many students had already taken those examinations and so the impact of these improvements was not fully seen in the 2014 results.
- The leadership of special educational needs has not kept a strong enough overview of the impact of different approaches to promote achievement and improve attendance and behaviour. Leaders know individual students well and monitor the attendance, progress and wider needs. As a result, individual students do well, but leaders have not 'stood back' to see if their work is having the impact intended over the whole group of students.
- Leaders have not used the pupil premium funding effectively to accelerate the progress of the students they are intended to support. While results for disadvantaged students have improved, so have those for other students. As a result, the gap between them has not narrowed enough. Leaders have not rigorously monitored the planning or impact of different approaches to see if they are providing good value for money.
- Leaders of subjects are increasingly effective. Recent appointments of leaders for mathematics and English have had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and the accuracy of assessment. The sponsor has been effective both in making these appointments and in the support provided to bring about

these improvements. Such support includes training from the Norfolk Teacher Training Centre in leadership and checking the accuracy of work compared to other schools. Current data show the impact of this has been stronger in English than in mathematics partly linked to a legacy of previous inappropriate early entry for GCSE in mathematics.

- Pastoral leadership is strong but it has been too narrowly focused on just two members of staff, rather than being shared more widely across a range of middle leaders. As a result, these leaders have been seen as the ones taking all the responsibility for attendance and behaviour. As a result, impact on improving attendance is less evident as it is too thinly spread.
- Strong advice and careers guidance and links with other local post-16 providers mean that students who need support to move to the next stage in their education are well catered for. Those who are more confident have a wide choice of academic and work-related provision. As a result, almost all students who leave the academy move on to sixth form, a college course or other training. This is an improvement on the previous picture.
- Systems to check on teachers' performance focus on ensuring that students make better progress as a result of improved teaching. Objectives for staff are closely linked to the national 'Teachers Standards' and progression up pay scales is linked to the progress students make.
- Policies for safeguarding, child protection and equal opportunities are kept up to date by senior leaders and shared with governors. There is a strong practical commitment to taking the actions needed to ensure students are safe, feel safe and understand risks and intolerance of discrimination. These aspects of the academy's work are at its core and are very secure. Safeguarding meets all statutory requirements.
- Students understand British values and are not afraid to speak out when they consider that their voice is not heard enough. The academy is holding an academy election to mirror the upcoming Westminster General Election. Choosing roles, making decisions together and listening to the views of others, are specifically taught as part of the curriculum. For example, in an English lesson, students considered how the role of women in the 1930s was portrayed in the text.
- Students have a strong understanding of social and moral features and these are seen in lessons with students working together and setting out different views. However, opportunities for developing spiritual and cultural aspects have less emphasis in lessons. As a result, students are not prepared as well for life in modern Britain as they should be.
- Leaders check the progress, attendance and behaviour of students attending alternative provision rigorously, but they have not evaluated the impact of their actions across the various groups of students who attend the different provisions.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved considerably since the last inspection and provides effective leadership of the academy. The academy instigated its own review of both governance and use of the pupil premium. As a result, the governing body has taken on new members with key skills in education and finance. These skills, together with the setting up of an Academy Improvement Board, have enabled the governors to better challenge senior leaders.
 - Recommendations from the review of the pupil premium are in the process of being acted upon. These are enabling governors to look at the impact of current funding more closely across the academy.
 - Governors increasingly understand the performance of the academy and how well students achieve, attend and behave. Challenge from them on GCSE results has been in evidence since the dip in 2013, but until recently governors have had an overgenerous view of behaviour in the academy.
 - Governors know about how the academy manages the performance of teachers. They understand the link between teachers' performance and pay progression. This is rigorously monitored so that effective teachers are rewarded and, when necessary others do not progress up the pay scales. Governors know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance.
 - Governors receive reports and are kept informed of safeguarding procedures; all governors have undergone the checks required and understand their role in safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. This is because a few teachers and students have yet to show that they fully understand in practice that behaviour, including low-level disruption is everyone's responsibility.
- Behaviour arrangements have changed this term with the setting up of an 'exit room' in each department. Teachers who make use of this then 'phone home to arrange the next steps and ensure parents are clear about what has happened. Escalation for more serious concerns, have a clear pathway which includes the Principal. As a result, data show the number of internal and external exclusions have halved this term compared with last term.
- There is a wide range of provision for students who need longer-term support to improve their skills and attitudes to learning. These include the 'Hub' and alternative provision, including a programme at the Outdoor Centre. Detailed records show the positive impact of these on the behaviour and personal development skills of students. Swift and successful return to mainstream classes is clearly understood as the prime goal and data show that most students are now reintegrating after three to six weeks.
- Behaviour around the academy, when entering or leaving the site, and at break and lunchtimes is very positive. Most students appreciate their facilities. A fire drill showed calm and orderly behaviour by students. Students know the rules for mobile 'phones and keep to them well. Uniform is worn with pride and students' books are mainly tidy and well set out.
- Rewards for positive contributions, attendance and behaviour are appreciated by students and have a high profile, being displayed on large screen in the atrium. Students are proud to be on the board and the top four students are able to choose the music (with lyrics suitably vetted first) that signals the changeover for lessons. Students show real appreciation for the pastoral staff and say that they feel like they are part of their family.
- Students' behaviour on programmes of alternative provision is good. There are clear expectations and sanctions and students respond well to the one-to-one support they often receive to improve their attitudes to learning. Deaf students are cared for well and their parents are very positive about the provision made for them by the unit within the academy.
- Students do not attend well enough. Attendance has improved year-on-year since the last inspection but it is still low and is not catching up with national levels fast enough. A few students have very low levels of attendance.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. While students are kept safe, some records are not kept rigorously enough.
- The academy works well with the local safer-schools officer as well as with external agencies. As a result, even the youngest and most at-risk students talked confidently to inspectors about risks from such things as domestic violence, child sexual exploitation and on-line risks such as radicalisation, grooming and sexting.
- There is an open and honest approach to bullying in the academy. Students are very clear about the different types and the difference between name-calling and bullying. Students say there are some incidences of bullying but they have absolute confidence that they are dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.
- From the small number of responses to Parent View, those which relate to 'progress', being 'well-looked-after' and 'safe' were positive from the large majority of parents. Students say they feel safe in the academy.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time is inconsistent. There are signs of improved teaching in a number of subjects including English and mathematics, physical education, art, geography, religious education and Spanish, but teaching is weaker in core science and history.
- Too many lower-attaining students in Years 9, 10 and 11 still struggle with aspects of literacy and their basic skills in mathematics are too weak. Teachers do not always provide enough support for these students and, as a result lower-attaining students make less progress than others in the academy.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has been used effectively, especially in literacy, to improve the outcomes for students rapidly who enter the academy below average in English. Data show that these students have made good progress by the end of Year 7, and this is sustained by the end of Year 8.
- Expectations of what students can do are not always high enough. Where teachers are really clear about what they expect, students quickly engage and work hard to meet the challenge. When teachers are less clear about what they expect students to achieve, or how they will tackle any difficulties they might meet, then a few students become distracted.
- The more accomplished teachers use probing questions to make students think and reflect on their ideas. Some teachers tend to provide students with all the answers or set them tasks that are too repetitive and fail to build up skills quickly enough, so a few students become bored.
- The marking of work is too inconsistent. The academy is in the process of drafting a new marking policy. At present, expectations of students' work are not high enough and there is too much variation in the way teachers mark students' work to ensure that it improves over time.
- A strong feature of teaching is the way in which students work together in small groups within lessons. For example, in a mathematics lesson students were mentoring each other, explaining how they completed examination questions on transforming curves and how they overcame any difficulties they met. In other classes, a few students do not take working together seriously, for example giggling when reviewing each other's work.
- Relationship between students and teachers are generally good. Students are clear on what attitudes to learning are expected of them. The system of warning and consequences is understood although some students reported to inspectors that a small number of students argue over being given a warning.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students enter Year 7 with standards that are well below the national average. In 2014, the proportion of students who gained five or more A* to C GCSEs, including English and mathematics, at their first attempt was well below the government's expected minimum performance. Students did not make enough progress in English or mathematics in 2014.
- The 2014 figures were an improvement on the very low performance in 2013, and a rise against a national fall. However, too many of the 2014 students took examinations as early as Year 9 or 10 in a wide range of subjects. Given their low attainment on entry, this meant that students had not had enough time to make up the gaps and reach national standards.
- Inappropriate early entry to GCSE across too many subjects, but especially in mathematics was a key factor in the weaker progress made by students who entered Year 7 below the national average. The most-able students made progress broadly in line with national averages across their main academic subjects with the exception of mathematics. Early entry for all students in mathematics in 2014 did limit the number of grades at B or above achieved. Early entry in mathematics no longer takes place.

- In 2014, the gap between disadvantaged students in the academy and other students nationally was too wide. In both English and mathematics, disadvantaged students in the academy were two GCSE grades behind other students nationally and one GCSE grade behind other students in the academy.
- Disadvantaged students made better progress in English in 2014 than they did in 2013. But students did not make better progress in both English and mathematics than other students in the academy. However, the academy's current data show an improving picture in Years 7 to 11 this year and gaps are narrowing.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make progress that varies widely, similar to other students in the academy. Specific support from specialist teachers and teaching assistants, is planned well and is effective, this includes students who are deaf. The overall impact of this is restricted by inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in lessons.
- The small proportion of students from Eastern Europe is making good progress as a result of their own high expectations of what they can achieve. Their ambition and very positive attitudes to learning mean they make the most of the teaching they receive, even when it varies in quality.
- The small numbers of students who attend off-site provision, either full-time or part-time make good progress as a result of the careful attention to their needs. Consequently, these students are well prepared for the next stage in their education, employment and training.

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	135904
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	456061

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	829
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Bohn
Principal	Mary Sparrow
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2013
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