

Felixstowe Academy

High Street, Felixstowe, IP11 9QR

Inspection dates 2–3 June 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Some teachers do not check students' understanding carefully enough or ensure that work is pitched at the right level to challenge students sufficiently.
- Not enough of the most-able students reach the highest levels or make consistently good progress in mathematics.
- Students do not always receive enough support for their literacy and numeracy skills outside English and mathematics lessons.
- Some teachers do not make sure that students complete their work or present it as neatly as they should.
- A few teachers do not give teaching assistants enough guidance to help them support students effectively.
- Some teachers do not mark students' work regularly or make sure that students act on the advice given by marking.
- On occasion, students do not concentrate fully on their work in lessons or pay enough attention to what the teacher is saying.
- A small number of students, including some disadvantaged students, are persistently absent.
- The sixth form requires improvement because achievement is not yet good.

The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving academy. Academy leaders are effective. They are bringing about steady and sustained improvements in teaching and achievement.
- Good leadership is driving improvement in the sixth form.
- Support for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, including those taught at 'The House', is outstanding.
- Most disadvantaged students are making good progress in English and mathematics.
- Support for students' personal development is excellent.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students are kept safe at all times and are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students during lessons and looked at the quality of work in their books. Some of the observations were conducted jointly with the Principal or with other members of the leadership team.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Principal, senior, subject and other leaders, groups of students, parents, members of the governing body and representatives of the Academies Enterprise Trust.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in the 153 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors scrutinised the academy's data about students' attainment and progress as well as data on their behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors also considered documents evaluating the academy's performance, its plans for improvement, notes about the work of the governing body and policies concerning the safeguarding of students.

Inspection team

Godfrey Bancroft, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Christopher Dean	Additional Inspector
Piers Ranger	Additional Inspector
Angela Podmore	Additional Inspector
Lynn Lowery	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized secondary academy. It is part of the chain of academies run by the Academies Enterprise Trust.
- The academy's last inspection was in November 2013, when it was judged to require improvement. Since then it has received three Ofsted monitoring visits to check on its progress.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students who come from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are both well below average.
- The proportion of students for whom the academy receives the pupil premium (additional government funding to support students who are in the care of the local authority or who are known to be eligible for free school meals) is broadly average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is broadly average.
- The academy currently has a small number of students who follow educational courses organised by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) and other courses hosted by Otley College. A small number of students are taught at home due to medical conditions, and others are taught at the academy's off-site facility, 'The House'.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy moved to new buildings in the spring of 2014. It was previously housed on the sites of the former Deben and Orwell High Schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and students' progress so that both are consistently good, by making sure teachers:
 - set work that is matched precisely to students' needs and interests, builds on their previous learning, and helps them sustain their concentration and show good attitudes to learning throughout each lesson
 - improve their use of questioning to check and extend students' understanding of their learning
 - provide greater challenge for the most-able students, particularly in mathematics, so that more reach the highest levels and grades
 - provide more support for the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills outside English and mathematics lessons
 - insist that students complete all the tasks they are set and present their work as neatly as they can
 - mark students' work regularly, and check that they act on the advice they have been given
 - advise teaching assistants about how to support students effectively during lessons.
- Improve the attendance of the few students, including disadvantaged students, who are persistent absentees.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Although they recognise that more needs to be done, academy leaders are working effectively to bring about improvements in students' behaviour and progress, and also in the quality of teaching. They have overcome the difficulties posed by the transition into the academy's new buildings, which brought considerable disruption to the daily life of the academy in the early part of 2014. Academy leaders are committed to ensuring that every student is able to do as well as they can. The academy has a good capacity to sustain and build upon the improvements that have already been introduced.
- Academy leaders have an accurate view of what is working well and of the priorities that need to be addressed. Plans for improvement are detailed and precise. They identify clearly how things will be improved and how the impact of improvements on students' progress will be evaluated.
- The leadership of teaching is good, particularly in the sixth form. Academy leaders have improved teachers' effectiveness by providing them with good training opportunities and by making regular checks on the quality of their teaching. Staff say that they appreciate the opportunities they are given to improve their practice. Senior leaders ensure that only those teachers who are able to demonstrate that they have improved students' progress are rewarded through promotion or increases in salary. Although this has helped to eradicate the weakest teaching, leaders recognise that further improvement is necessary; for example, there are still inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' planned lesson activities and in their marking of students' work.
- Staff with responsibility for key subjects, such as English, mathematics and science, and for students' personal development, undertake their duties well. Information about students' progress is analysed in detail and is used to identify appropriate priorities for improvement.
- The response to the online survey Parent View indicated a relatively high proportion of parents who were unhappy about various aspects of the academy's work. These concerns include how the academy responds to parents' complaints, the information provided about students' progress and worries about students' behaviour. However, parents who spoke to the inspectors were very complimentary about the academy's work and the quality of education their children receive. Inspectors judged that the academy provides good opportunities to help parents to support their children's learning. It also provides parents with clear information about how well their children are progressing.
- There is too little support for students' numeracy skills outside mathematics itself and, to a lesser extent, for the development of students' writing skills outside English. In other respects, the curriculum is generally well planned and supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The academy makes particular efforts to encourage students to show respect for those who come from different backgrounds and cultures. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
- The academy is working effectively to embrace the recent changes made to the national curriculum. The academy provides good opportunities for students to learn about key aspects of the British way of life and the values that underpin it, and students are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, the academy held its own election to coincide with the recent general election. This created great excitement and contributed well to students' understanding of how government works. Drama, music and sport all have a high profile in the academy, which also offers a wide range of additional activities, such as the media club, for students to enjoy.
- The academy, in partnership with churches in the region, has appointed a chaplain who provides excellent support for students' personal development and helps them to overcome the various challenges they face in their everyday lives. This is helping to improve students' behaviour. Leaders monitor closely the progress of students who attend alternative provision and ensure these students also attend regularly, behave appropriately and are safe.
- The academy provides all students with good guidance on how to make decisions about their future

careers, for example whether to enter immediately into employment or to move on to the next stage of their education.

- Leaders make good use of all additional funding, such the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch up funding, to provide support for those who are eligible, and this is improving their progress. Although more needs to be done, for example to support the progress of the most-able students, academy leaders are working hard to ensure all students have the same good opportunities to succeed.
- Leaders from the Academies Enterprise Trust provide academy leaders and governors with highly effective support and good training opportunities. For example, they have helped arrange visits for senior leaders to view the work of outstanding academies. They also support the academy in evaluating the quality of its performance and in identifying and addressing aspects of provision that require improvement.
- The academy works effectively with primary schools in the area. There are good opportunities for academy staff to work alongside their primary colleagues to support and gain insights into their practice. There are also excellent opportunities for Year 6 pupils from the local primary schools to visit the academy and become familiar with how the academy works before they start the next stage of their education.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors have a detailed knowledge of all aspects of the academy’s work. They know what is going well and recognise what needs to be improved. Governors question academy leaders rigorously about anything that is not working as well as it should be.
 - Governors have an excellent knowledge of how well the various groups of students are making progress and know how the academy’s performance compares to that of other schools. They check with great care to ensure that additional funding, such as the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch up funding, is helping improve students’ progress.
 - Governors are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching. They have a good understanding of the system for rewarding teachers who bring about improvements in students’ progress. They also visit regularly and observe lessons in partnership with academy leaders.
 - Governors are meticulous in fulfilling their responsibilities to keep students safe. They ensure that the arrangements for safeguarding students are effective and meet requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- Students’ attitudes to learning are improving, with most working hard during lessons. However, too often students do not take enough care or pride with their work either in its presentation or its completion. There are still some lessons where students do not sustain their concentration well enough or work as hard as they should. While most students behave well there is a minority who, at times, are inappropriately boisterous and loud.
- The proportion of students excluded for inappropriate behaviour rose in 2014 and was above the national average. This is because academy leaders took a hard line and refused to tolerate unacceptable behaviour. This approach paid dividends and the proportion of students excluded for any reason has reduced markedly in the current academic year.
- Attendance is also improving. In the last academic year it was below average. It is now broadly average. However, there remain a small number of students, including a few disadvantaged students, who are persistent absentees.
- There are good opportunities for students to take responsibility. They value opportunities to become prefects or to contribute to the student voice. Older students, particularly those in the sixth form, often take the lead in arranging sporting and musical activities. They undertake visits to local primary schools to help new students settle quickly into academy life and provide good role models for younger students.

- Students are becoming increasingly well informed about fundamental values and life in modern Britain. Students show respect and understanding towards those who come from backgrounds and cultures that are very different to their own. They are welcoming to students who join the academy from abroad. They help them to settle in and support those who are at an early stage of learning English.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe in the academy and this is confirmed by most parents.
- Arrangements to ensure that students are safe are effective and meet current requirements. The academy takes great care to check the background of staff when making appointments and to ensure that staff are appropriately qualified. Leaders make regular checks to make sure the site is safe and does not present any risk to students.
- The provision made to support the most vulnerable students is outstanding. The academy has an excellent nurture group that supports students in gaining the confidence and self-esteem they need to learn effectively. 'The House' provides students, who would otherwise be unlikely to attend school, with a haven in which they feel secure and can flourish. Students who attend 'The House' are full of praise for its work. One student commented, 'If it was not for The House I would never have attended school or made the progress I have. The staff are fantastic.'
- Students say that bullying in a variety of forms does sometimes occur. However, they are very clear about what constitutes bullying and know what is needed to resolve any problems. Should difficulties arise, students are confident that staff will act swiftly and effectively to support them and help to find an amicable resolution of any incident. The academy gives a high profile to ensuring that students are fully aware of the potential risks of misusing the internet and social media.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Some teachers do not always pitch work at the right level to provide students, particularly the most able, with a suitable level of challenge. Staff do not consistently give enough consideration to the stage that students have already reached when planning the next steps in their learning.
- Although the teaching of mathematics is improving, there are occasions when work set in this subject is not hard enough to ensure that the most-able students attain the highest levels and grades in their examinations. In mathematics lessons, teachers do not always use questions effectively to check students' understanding and to help them to think in greater depth. Some teachers in other subjects do not provide enough support for students' numeracy.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not ensure that the tasks they set are interesting so that students are fully engaged in their work and concentrate throughout the lesson. There are also examples of work in the books of some students that have not been fully completed or which are not presented tidily.
- Teaching assistants often provide good quality help for those students who struggle with their learning. This is particularly the case for those students who face the most significant challenges. The support they receive is of exceptionally high quality and is tailored carefully to their needs. However, not all teachers provide assistants with the advice and guidance they need to help students understand the activities they are set and to make progress.
- Teachers' assessments are generally accurate and students are increasingly well informed about the levels they are achieving and about their target grades. However, some teachers do not mark students' work regularly or make sure that students follow up the advice that marking gives them.
- The teaching of English is good overall. Most teachers develop students' reading skills well. Time is regularly allocated to improving reading during English lessons and in many other subjects. In most subjects, though not all, teachers plan activities that build on students' basic skills in speaking and listening and help to improve their writing.

The achievement of pupils**requires improvement**

- In 2014, the proportion of students gaining five A*-C passes in GCSE examinations, including English and mathematics, was below average. Even so, these results represented an improvement when compared with 2013. Evidence provided by the academy and moderated externally, and the quality of students' work in lessons and in their books, indicates that, this year, standards are much stronger. Results are set to improve markedly and are on course to compare favourably with last year's national average. The academy does not enter students early for examinations.
- Although the achievement of the most-able students is improving across the academy, these students do not always do as well as they should in public examinations. The proportion attaining A* and A grades lags behind the national average, particularly in mathematics.
- Standards in English have risen year on year and the proportion of students making or exceeding expected progress compares favourably with that found nationally. Although in the past attainment in mathematics has lagged behind that in English, the gap is now closing and students' achievement in mathematics is improving. The proportion of students on course to gain an A*-C GCSE pass in mathematics is close to last year's national average. The proportion of students making expected progress in mathematics also compares favourably with the national picture. However, the proportion exceeding expected progress and the number of students expected to gain an A* or A grade are both below average.
- Standards and progress are also improving in Key Stage 3. In each of Years 7, 8 and 9, the proportion of students performing at the levels expected for their age is rising.
- Students make good progress in their reading, which is promoted well in English lessons and in other subjects. Students whose reading was weak when they first entered the school receive good support. The academy makes good use of the Year 7 catch up funding to close the gaps identified in their previous learning.
- Most students make good progress in acquiring literacy skills when these are taught in formal English lessons. However, their progress in writing is not always supported as well in other subjects as it is in reading. The progress of some students in mathematics is also restricted because there are not enough opportunities for them to consolidate their basic skills by applying them in other subjects.
- Disabled students and those who have a special educational need are making good progress. This is because in the majority of lessons they are supported well. The most vulnerable students and particularly those taught in 'The House' make exceptional progress, particularly in the vocational courses they follow.
- Students who are taught at the various off-site providers make good progress in their mainly vocational courses. The academy is in frequent contact with these providers and keeps a careful check on the progress that students make.
- The achievement of disadvantaged students is rapidly improving. The gap between their attainment and others' is closing steadily. In 2014, disadvantaged students in Year 11 were a grade behind others in the academy and almost two grades behind other students nationally, in both English and mathematics. The current Year 11 students are on course to narrow this gap. In some year groups, in both English and mathematics, the progress of the disadvantaged students is now faster than that of other students.
- Students who join the academy from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language settle in quickly and soon begin to make good progress.

The sixth form provision**requires improvement**

- The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The academy provides students of all abilities

with access to a range of courses that meet their needs well. Leaders are well focused on improvement. They undertake detailed analysis of information about students' progress and make good use of their findings to plan the next stage in students' learning. Leaders also provide good support for their colleagues, making sure that their knowledge of developments in their subjects is up to date and that they are well placed to respond to students' needs.

- Behaviour and safety in the sixth form are good. Students are enthusiastic learners who apply themselves well. They respond well to the good range of opportunities provided to support their learning. Students appreciate the access they have to computers and to the dedicated working spaces provided by the academy. They readily embrace responsibility, for example, by supporting younger students and by taking the lead in a range of additional activities. Students are prepared well for life in modern Britain. They have a good insight into their local community and society generally and are familiar with the work of government organisations.
- Teaching requires improvement. Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They keep a careful eye on students' progress and are quick to respond to the needs of any who are falling behind or are struggling with their work. The marking of students' work is helpful, although not all teachers check closely enough to make sure that students have acted on the advice their marking provides.
- Students' attainment when they enter the sixth form is rising, although it remains lower than that found in most sixth forms. Some students enter the sixth form without having attained at least a C grade in GCSE English and mathematics. Examination re-sits result in improved grades for almost all students.
- Students' progress in many subjects is slower than that found nationally and requires improvement. However, there are signs of improvement, particularly in vocational courses. In AS level courses students' progress compares favourably with that found in other sixth forms. However, students' progress in 'A' level courses lags behind the expected levels. Attainment at this stage, while on course to improve in 2015, remains lower than found nationally, with comparatively few students gaining the higher A* and A grades.
- Progression rates are excellent. Last year all students went on to enter employment or continue with their education. They receive good advice both from the academy and independent agencies to help them make informed decisions about their futures.

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	137321
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	462043

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1159
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Robinson
Principal	Andrew Salter
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2013
Telephone number	01394 288228
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