

Wrenn School

London Road, Wellingborough, NN8 2DQ

Inspection dates 2–3 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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

- Leadership and management require improvement. While effective systems have been introduced through this academic year, these are not sufficiently established to have brought about sustained improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Achievement requires improvement because too few students make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their students can achieve in lessons. Teachers' planning does not routinely take into account the different needs and potential of their students. As a result, students do not make progress fast enough, including the most able.
- The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and their peers in English and mathematics is not closing quickly enough.
- New appointments have strengthened leadership of key departments. However, these have not been in place long enough to have brought about significant change.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Leaders have not regularly and thoroughly analysed the progress of students in the sixth form. Students have not been set challenging targets. New systems for more frequent and rigorous tracking of students' progress have not been established for sufficient time to have had a sustained impact on achievement in the sixth form.

The school has the following strengths

- The newly re-structured leadership team has rapidly put in place new systems and routines that have led to improvements in students' attainment, especially in Year 11.
- The behaviour of students is good. The new rewards system is highly effective in boosting attendance, punctuality and good conduct in lessons and around the academy. Students receive excellent support from their year managers who help them to resolve any concerns promptly.
- There are some examples of very good practice across the academy when teachers use their strong subject knowledge to engage and challenge their students so they make good progress.
- Careers guidance is relevant and helpful so that students can make well-informed decisions about their future.
- The curriculum is wide ranging and fully meets the needs and interests of students, including in the sixth form. The curriculum boosts students' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- The leadership team, supported by the Trust, has rapidly developed an ethos of raised aspirations and ambition across the academy. Teachers state that they feel re-energised and excited by the drive towards improvement. There are early signs that new systems and routines are effective.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons across all subjects and all year groups, apart from Year 13 who were on study leave. An inspector accompanied the head of sixth form on a learning walk to observe sixth form revision sessions. An inspector visited an assembly and tutor times. Inspectors observed the behaviour of students in and between lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the associate headteacher, members of the senior team and heads of department. They also met with the member of staff responsible for maintaining the single central record, members of the governing body, the Director of Education for The Education Fellowship Trust, the special educational needs co-ordinator, and three members of the governing body.
- Inspectors evaluated a range of documents including the academy's self-evaluation, records of the monitoring of teaching, data to show the tracking of students' achievement, behaviour and attendance logs and safeguarding documentation. They also looked at samples of students' work.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of students and held informal discussions with them in lessons and around the academy.
- Inspectors visited, or had telephone conversations with, staff at the alternative provision sites used by the academy.
- Inspectors took into account 69 responses to Parent View, the on-line questionnaire and 109 questionnaires completed by members of staff.
- The inspection took place during the examination period when not all lessons were taking place in Year 11 and the sixth form.

Inspection team

Amanda Carter-Fraser, Lead inspector

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Additional Inspector

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Susan Lomas

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Full report

Information about this school

- Wrenn School converted to academy status, joining the Education Fellowship Trust in September 2013. The academy is based on two sites. All year groups attend lessons on both sites. The academy is slightly larger than the averaged-sized secondary school for 11-18 year olds.
- When the academy's predecessor school, also called Wrenn School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The associate headteacher took up his post in February 2015, joining the academy from another in the Trust.
- Around one fifth of students are in receipt of pupil premium funding. This is similar to the national average. Pupil premium funding is additional government funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is very close to the national average.
- A small number of students attend alternative provision at several different locations used by the academy, on a part-time or full-time basis: Complementary Education; Education and Youth Services; Lunar Racing; Rushmere; On Track; Complementary Education; Hospital and Outreach; and The Real Project.
- The academy is supported by the Education Fellowship Trust. The Director of Education of the Trust is in regular contact with the associate headteacher to provide support with strategic planning and monitoring of progress.
- In 2014, the academy did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise expectations of students by ensuring teaching consistently challenges students of different abilities and improves their academic performance.
- Support middle leaders, including new leaders such as the head of mathematics, to develop their role in driving achievement.
- Use robust data more precisely to set targets and track students' progress in the sixth form. Build on recent good practice in leadership.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The newly restructured senior leadership team has taken decisive action to raise standards across the academy. Regularly and helpfully supported by members of the Trust, leaders have introduced rigorous systems to address areas for improvement. These have started to have some impact, but achievement is not good.
- Leaders have identified and tackled decisively areas for improvement in the quality of teaching. Training, support and coaching are beginning to have an impact, but are in the early stages of moving the quality of teaching to consistently good. This means that students are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders have introduced robust systems for measuring students' progress. Teachers regularly collect data that is checked by leaders in the academy to ensure that it is accurate. Subject and year leaders use this data effectively to check students' progress and to identify where students are underachieving. Teaching staff complete a helpful 'context for learning' sheet for each of their classes, which details the support they provide for their students. Consequently, there is a greater sense of accountability among staff at all levels for students' achievement. Although early signs are promising, these systems have not been established for sufficient time to lead to sustained improvement.
- Leaders have taken immediate action to address poor attainment in Year 11, with the introduction of intense programmes of intervention and support. Moderated assessments indicate rapid improvements in the predicted attainment of Year 11. However, their levels of progress, including in English and mathematics, are low.
- Leaders are clear about how pupil premium funding has been allocated, and about the achievement of disadvantaged students. However, they are less clear about how well specific activities and actions help these students.
- The associate headteacher has rapidly forged an ethos of high expectations for behaviour, aspiration and achievement, based on being 'proud to be Wrenn' – working hard; showing respect; enjoying learning; never giving up and believing that nothing is impossible. Staff and students have responded to these values with a renewed sense of ambition, so that new policies and practice have become secure promptly and are beginning to lead to improvements.
- Leaders rightly identify the key areas of strength and those needing improvement across all aspects of the academy. Their self-evaluation is accurate.
- Subject and pastoral leaders welcome the change of pace and increasing focus on achievement that has come with the new senior leadership. They are developing their own leadership skills through work with their senior line managers as well as representatives of the Trust. They are becoming more confident in using the new data systems and are enthusiastic about the renewed drive for improvement in the academy. The effectiveness of these leaders has increased as they feel well-placed to hold members of their teams to account for the quality of teaching in their subject areas.
- Leaders ensure that staff training raises awareness of special educational needs and that diagnosis of students' needs is precise. The special educational needs co-ordinator has overseen the academy's adoption of effective strategies to support the learning of disabled students and students with special educational needs. As a result of the appropriate support they receive, these students are making similar rates of progress to some of their peers, particularly in English and science.
- The academy's curriculum is well led and contributes substantially to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The programme of personal, social and health education places them in a strong position to recognise and tackle discrimination. Students, especially in the sixth form, feel well informed to make decisions about their future education pathways and career plans due to the timely and relevant

guidance they receive from their teachers. The curriculum is wide ranging and ensures equality of opportunity for students to pursue their areas of interest.

- Leaders have established high expectations of good conduct, mutual respect and ambition, to which staff and students have responded very positively. Leaders ensure that any concerns are dealt with promptly and effectively. Leaders have appointed year managers who play a crucial role in supporting students and successfully encourage their motivation towards their studies.
- Leaders foster good relations with parents. The associate headteacher provides regular updates of news and information for parents on the academy's website. Leaders ensure that staff are persistent in making essential contact with students' homes to follow up absence and any concerns. This has led to improvements in attendance and behaviour.
- Leaders ensure that there is close supervision of students as they move between the academy's two sites. Students have a good understanding of how to keep safe. All statutory safeguarding measures are in place.
- Leaders regularly review the progress of students attending alternative provision. They ensure that frequent contact is maintained with staff at the alternative provision so that students have the support they need. Detailed records show that these students have improved their attendance and motivation towards their studies and are achieving well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a clear understanding of the priorities for the academy. They have restructured their board and become more effective as a result. Each governor is linked to a faculty. They spend a 'governor's in-day' with their faculty every six weeks and report back to the full board. Governors have access to the new online systems for monitoring the quality of teaching. They are knowledgeable about the work in different subject areas, practically involved in monitoring of the quality of teaching on a regular basis and have a precise knowledge of the areas for improvement across the academy. Through experience and training, they are able to challenge and support senior leaders appropriately. They have worked with the associate headteacher to develop a rigorous new appraisal system in which the academy's priorities form the basis of individual teacher's target-setting. They have supported the associate headteacher appropriately in addressing areas for improvement in the quality of teaching.
 - Governors have a good understanding of the use of data to measure students' progress. Governors recognise the need to have a closer link to the sixth form to ensure that the new leadership receives appropriate support and that the analysis of students' performance is scrutinised at the same depth as that developing in the rest of the academy.
 - Since the school became an academy, the governing body's role is that of an academy advisory board. The Trust has produced helpful guidance on the specific responsibilities of an academy advisory board. Governors welcome the increasing levels of support from the trust but there remains some lack of clarity about the relative roles and responsibilities of the governing body and the Trust, for example in financial management.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students conduct themselves well in lessons and around the academy. There are few instances of low-level disruption to learning. Students respond promptly to teachers' instructions to re-focus. They remain settled at times when they are waiting for further tasks and challenges.
- Students have a very positive attitude to their studies, arriving on time and well prepared for their lessons. They take pride in their work, which is generally presented neatly. They routinely have their planners to hand to record set homework.
- Students respond respectfully to teachers' high expectations of good behaviour. The introduction of a new

reward system has been very well received by students. This has led to improvements in behaviour, punctuality and attendance.

- Students have acquired a high level of awareness about different forms of bullying through the well-planned personal, health and social education programmes and assemblies. Students are very clear that they can go to their teachers and, especially, the year managers, if they have any worries, and that any concerns would be resolved quickly.
- Parents and students report that behaviour is good. Staff note that the behaviour policy is more consistently applied so behaviour in lessons has improved. The year managers play a crucial role in helping students to focus on their studies. Year managers are immediately on hand if a student needs support and boost contact with parents to help improve attendance and punctuality.
- The academy maintains close contact with any alternative provision to ensure that behaviour of students there is good.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils students safe and secure is good.
- Staff supervise closely the movement of students between sites so that routines are safe and smooth. Special arrangements are made, if needed, for students to be accompanied between sites by staff if they are ever worried, for example, if they are new to the academy.
- Students value the opportunity to use an online resource introduced in the academy to enable students to share any worries with the senior team. Students' messages are monitored very closely by members of staff so that concerns are followed up and sorted out very quickly.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the security risks associated with a split site and are taking appropriate measures to address these.
- Statutory safeguarding requirements are in place and staff receive regular and appropriate training.
- The academy makes careful checks to ensure that students in alternative provision are safe.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teachers do not routinely use information about students' progress when planning lessons to ensure that tasks match the needs of individual students. Teachers' expectations for what their students can achieve in lessons are not high enough. For example, some students, especially the most able, are often ready to move on more quickly than others and do not have sufficient opportunity to do so. Students do not make the progress of which they are capable, as the quality of teaching is not consistently good.
- Assessment of students' learning in lessons is not a regular aspect of teaching at the academy. There are good examples of teachers using assessment criteria to help students mark their own or others' work, for example in drama and geography. When this is done well, students make good progress. However, this does not happen routinely.
- The quality of marking and feedback in books varies within and between departments. While there are some examples of good practice, with students given helpful feedback to which they respond effectively in lessons, this is infrequent. The expectations of the assessment policy are not secure across the academy.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' good behaviour and attentiveness in lessons. There is a purposeful working atmosphere in most lessons with students focused on their work, although sometimes finding it too easy. There is a positive rapport between staff and students. Teaching assistants provide effective targeted support for students.

- Teachers provide regular and helpful opportunities in lessons for students to develop their skills in literacy and reading. Students read out loud confidently. Students' use of grammar and punctuation improves when they receive good quality feedback from their teachers, as in some examples in English and history. The use of mathematics and numeracy skills is promoted less well, so students rarely have the opportunity to boost these skills in different subjects.
- Teachers regularly set homework that is relevant and helpful. Students are able to refer back to homework they have completed to support their learning in lessons.
- There are some examples of very good practice across different departments, especially when teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge. They capture the interest of students through clear explanations and stimulating tasks so that students make good progress.
- As a result of successful staff training, teachers use thoughtful questioning to help students deepen their thinking and develop their responses by using technical terms.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement, as too many students from all starting points are not making the progress of which they are capable across all three key stages, including the most able.
- The academy's data indicate that there will be an increase in Key Stage 4 attainment this year so that it will be securely above the national floor standard. This is as a result of leaders' concerted strategy to raise Year 11 attainment through intervention work, mentoring and a residential programme which focused on examination practice. However, progress in English and mathematics at Key Stage 4 is still too low, with too few students from each starting point making expected progress.
- In 2014, disadvantaged students achieved less well than their peers by about one grade in English and in mathematics. The academy's own data indicate that this gap is narrowing to around half a grade this year. However, achievement of both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students is lower than the national average. The gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and others nationally was just over one grade in English and almost 2 grades in mathematics.
- Too few students are making the expected progress in English and mathematics in Key Stage 3. The academy's own data show that only a third of Year 9 students are currently on track to make expected progress by the end of this academic year. However, the progress made by students who enter the academy with lower Key Stage 2 levels in English is improving over time, while there are signs of improved progress in Year 7 in mathematics.
- In some subjects, and in some year groups, disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve as well as their peers. However, this is because achievement overall is too low. They are not achieving as well as their peers in Years 7 and 8 in mathematics.
- The academy has effective strategies in place to encourage students to read, especially in Key Stage 3. Students regularly spend the first 15 minutes of English lessons reading. The librarian works closely with the English department and runs sessions to promote literacy, relevant to the topics they are studying.
- Students who attend alternative provision are closely monitored by the academy both in terms of attendance and progress. These students have been placed on courses that are appropriate to their needs. As a consequence, they are making good progress in their studies, with some students having already completed qualifications and being entered for additional courses.
- No students are entered early for GCSE.

The sixth form provision requires improvement

- The achievement of students in the sixth form requires improvement because students do not make the progress of which they are capable at AS and A2 level. This is because the quality of teaching and leadership has been too variable.
- Leaders have not tracked students' progress with sufficient rigour. This means that teachers do not provide students with the support, challenge and skills they need to enable them to achieve the highest grades.
- The new leadership of the sixth form is ambitious. Leaders acknowledge the need to place a greater focus on achievement data to enable them to have a more accurate view of current and past performance. New systems are now in place to track students' achievement and this is allowing leaders to identify and address underachievement more rapidly.
- Leaders provide strong pastoral care and focus upon employability skills as part of post-16 study programmes. There is a wide-ranging curriculum for students to choose from at AS level. The numbers following these courses into Year 13 has increased over recent years so that the proportion of students completing their courses, including disadvantaged students, is above the national average.
- Careers guidance is effective so that sixth-form students feel they have been able to make well-informed decisions both pre-16 and for their next steps.
- Sixth-form students have good attitudes to their learning. They say they feel proud to be part of the academy.
- Sixth-form students speak very positively about their all-round experience in the sixth form. They appreciate programmes to help them stay healthy, avoid risk, and know how to stay safe in a range of situations. They feel the sixth form is a community within itself while integral to the wider life of the academy.
- Recruitment to the sixth form has improved. The majority of sixth form students are drawn from the academy's current students with expected numbers for external applications predicted to rise.
- Very few students join the sixth form without having gained at least GCSE grade C passes in English and mathematics. Those students who retake these examinations are increasingly successful.

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	139961
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	450312

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	1186
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bill Mandeville
Associate headteacher	Steve Elliot
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01933 222039
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