

Norwich Road Academy

Norwich Road, Thetford, IP24 2HT

Inspection dates 16–17 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	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
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Teaching requires improvement. Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and they do not plan sufficiently well to meet the learning needs of all groups within their class. Consequently, pupils have not made enough progress in their learning, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Middle leaders have not received the appropriate training and support necessary for them to lead subjects in a way that will improve the quality of teaching and learning for pupils. Some teachers are not aware of the National Curriculum expectations for their year group.
- Systems to monitor behaviour and attendance are not rigorous enough.
- Procedures for the management of teachers' performance do not hold all staff to account and governors have not been sufficiently or accurately informed about the quality of teaching.
- In some classes, some pupils' behaviour prevents other pupils from learning and the class teacher does not manage it adequately.
- Younger pupils are not developing a positive attitude to learning nor an ability to work without adult direction.
- Governors are enthusiastic but lack the training to equip them better to hold leaders to account.
- Teachers do not fully understand systems for tracking pupils' performance and consequently the information about what pupils already know is not used effectively to determine the level of challenge in many lessons.

The school has the following strengths

- The newly appointed executive principal and the vice-principals have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for improvement and are taking swift and effective action to improve the academy.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is strong. Children are happy and safe, and make good progress.
- Procedures to ensure pupils' safety are thorough and robust. Pupils feel very safe at school.
- Additional groups helping pupils with their speech, reading and mathematics are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The team of inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching over time. This included observing parts of 24 lessons throughout the academy, including several jointly with the executive principal and vice principals.
- The inspectors looked at pupils’ work and children’s learning records, in-school tracking data, listened to readers and talked to pupils about their work.
- Policies, procedures and academy logs were considered along with academy documentation that covered the curriculum, pupils’ performance and the quality of teaching. The academy’s own self-evaluation was reviewed. Reports provided by the Academy Transformation Trust and independent consultants were shared.
- The views of parents were considered, including the 10 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire. An open meeting was held for parents, and inspectors met parents and carers on the playground.
- The views of staff were taken into account during discussions and through the 34 responses to Ofsted’s own staff questionnaire.
- Meetings were held with the executive principal, vice principals, the special needs co-ordinator, subject leaders, pupils, parents, representatives from the Academy Transformation Trust and governors.

Inspection team

Deborah Pargeter, Lead inspector	Seconded Inspector
Tracy Fielding	Seconded Inspector
Colin Lower	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average primary academy.
- Norwich Road Academy converted to become an academy school on 31 August 2013. When its predecessor school, Norwich Road Community Primary School, was inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement overall.
- The leadership arrangements are temporary and interviews are scheduled for a more permanent solution later in the term. The current principal is working in an executive capacity, leading two academies within the academy trust. The vice principals are both from the Norwich Road Academy.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those for whom the academy receives pupil-premium funding is one in five, which is broadly average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided to schools for pupils in local authority care and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Half of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups. This is a higher proportion than found in most schools. There is approximately the same proportion of pupils, half, who speak English as an additional language, which is also higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is slightly higher than average.
- Children of nursery age join the Early Years Foundation Stage for half day sessions in Nursery before moving full time into the Reception class.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement by:
 - developing teachers' subject knowledge so that they have a clear understanding of the National Curriculum expectations in each year group, particularly in English and mathematics
 - training teachers in the effective use of a data tracking system that provides them with clear information about what pupils know already and their rates of progress
 - supporting teachers to develop their behaviour management strategies to enable them to control pupils' behaviour and minimise classroom disruptions
 - creating a culture of high academic expectations and positive attitudes to learning for all groups of pupils.
- Improve leadership of the academy by:
 - supporting more middle leaders to improve pupils' performance in their areas of responsibility and providing them with the necessary skills and support to lead a subject or educational focus area effectively
 - ensuring that all teachers, especially those remunerated on the upper pay scale, are accountable for the performance of their pupils and their areas of responsibility as part of the performance management process
 - establishing robust systems to track and respond to behaviour, attendance and pupils' underperformance.
- Improve governance by:
 - supporting governors to develop a better understanding of academy data and key documents necessary to govern the academy effectively and hold senior leaders to account
 - providing governors with accurate information about pupils' and teachers' performance, in a concise format, that allows them to make accurate observations of the academy and provide appropriate and targeted challenge.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management can be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The executive principal and vice principals are uncompromising in their pursuit of school improvement. They have recognised all of the aspects of the academy that need addressing and are tackling them in a systematic, strategic manner. The majority of changes are recent and have not been in place long enough to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and behaviour.
- The recent upward trajectory of improved achievement is the result of strong senior leadership. The executive principal is starting to embed a culture of good-quality teaching and high expectations and this ethos is being shared with all staff.
- Procedures to support good behaviour and attendance are not robust enough. The senior leadership team are developing systems to ensure better behaviour and improved attendance. These systems are new, so impact is limited. Recent observations and records indicate that the impact of these systems is starting to be seen.
- Middle leaders do not have sufficient understanding of their roles. They demonstrate an ambition for their areas of responsibility but require additional support and guidance to ensure their actions have a positive impact on outcomes for pupils.
- Systems used to track pupils' progress are not effective at allowing senior leaders and teachers to monitor this. Senior leaders support their evaluations of pupils' achievement by scrutinising books and this approach provides a more accurate picture of progress in the short term, but is not sustainable.
- The curriculum is not always taught effectively and senior leaders recognise this. Teachers' understanding of the levels of challenge required and the age expectations for specific subjects do not align with the senior leaders' expectations and this is being addressed.
- Performance management systems are in place but they are not rigorous enough. The new executive principal is aware of this and systems are being adopted to provide greater professional accountability for teachers.
- Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements; they are thorough and leaders are tenacious in pursuing advice and additional support for vulnerable pupils.
- The school is effective in promoting an inclusive culture and the many pupils' nationalities and faiths are shared and celebrated. Pupils have a good understanding of social and moral responsibility, democracy and the values required for life in modern Britain. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is adequate. Pupils' enjoy school assemblies and the school's strong sense of community, and are given opportunities to reflect on their lives and the lives of others.
- Historically, leaders have not used the pupil premium grant effectively. New senior leaders have improved provision for disadvantaged pupils but the changes are too recent for there to be impact.
- The school sports grant has been used well to improve pupils' access to a greater variety of equipment, and skilled specialist coaches. Teachers are improving their practice by observing the coaches and pupils' involvement in sport outside the curriculum has increased. Staff and pupils are proud of their improved achievements at recent local sporting events.
- The academy chain is aiding continued school improvement well and provides support in all aspects of leadership, teaching and curriculum.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance requires improvement. Governors recognise the strengths and challenges the school has

faced over recent years and have provided good support to facilitate changes in senior leadership arrangements and the conversion to an academy. They show great determination in supporting the school to improve further.

- In the past, governors were provided with information about the quality of teaching and this was used to determine performance-related pay awards. Governors did not request further clarification on teachers' performance and they now appreciate that the information they were provided with was not always robust enough. This means that they do not have secure knowledge of the quality of teaching or how weaknesses are being addressed.
- Governors do not have sufficient understanding of pupils' academic performance because they require additional training. Their understanding has also been hindered by reports that are not always clear and concise enough.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement because a few groups of pupils are not developing a positive attitude to their learning and require constant adult supervision to remain on task. A minority of pupils cause disruption to lessons and prevent their peers from learning.
- Whole-school behaviour strategies, as outlined in the recently reviewed policy, are not used effectively by all staff, resulting in inconsistent behaviour expectations in classrooms. In classes where the behaviour policy is effectively applied, behaviour is good and pupils are engaged with their learning and make better progress.
- Pupils are kind and considerate to each other on the playground; they show respect to adults and are consistently polite. Older pupils assist younger pupils, often spontaneously.
- A large majority of pupils are very proud of their school and their achievements. They have positive relationships with staff and enjoy taking roles of responsibility.
- Attendance is below the national average with slight improvements over the last few years. Senior leaders recognise that not enough has been done to address attendance and persistent absences, but this is now being tackled.
- There have been several fixed term exclusions and they have been managed well. In all instances additional specialist support has been sought for the pupils and this has resulted in improved behaviour or increased adult provision in school.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All systems and procedures are thorough and reviewed regularly.
- Recent improvements have resulted in a safe and secure site and pupils recognise this by stating that there is nowhere on the school site where they feel unsafe.
- Pupils understand the rules they need to follow during the school day to be safe. At playtimes pupils respond well to staff and avoid areas that are restricted. Older pupils work with lunchtime staff to support younger pupils by entertaining them and encouraging them to play safely.
- Pupils recognise different types of bullying but state that there is very little bullying at their school. They feel confident that they would receive a rapid response if they talked to an adult about any concerns or worries.
- Parents are confident that their children are safe, happy and well cared for at school.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because not enough lessons provide adequate challenge to pupils. In some cases, the tasks set are too easy and pupils are easily distracted and disruptive. In these lessons there was little progress.
- Where learning is better, teachers ask challenging questions and express high expectations. Pupils are engaged in their learning and are clearly excited by the activities provided for them. Teachers develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding through topics that inspire and stimulate, making learning relevant and exciting. Pupils make good progress and display very positive attitudes.
- A small minority of teachers have poor subject knowledge resulting in low expectations of pupils due to a lack of understanding of age expectations, particularly in mathematics and English.
- The quality of teaching over time in mathematics and English is similar. Teachers are working with independent consultants to develop better understanding of how pupils learn these subjects and there is clear evidence of improvement in delivery. Pupils who find mathematics or English more challenging are supported through recognised intervention programmes that have ensured progress, in some cases accelerating it.
- The majority of teachers deliver lessons that meet the varying needs of their pupils. A small minority of teachers have limited teaching strategies and are unable to engage all learners, resulting in limited progress. Senior leaders are supporting these teachers with a structured development plan.
- All classrooms are organised and well resourced. Colourful displays promote learning and celebrate pupils' achievements. All subjects are equally well represented in displays around the school.
- Teachers express high expectations of presentation in pupils' books resulting in neat and well-cared-for exercise books.
- Marking and feedback are consistent and follow the school policy. Pupils respond to annotations that indicate pupils' next steps in learning. The majority of pupils know what they need to do to improve in mathematics and English.
- Teaching assistants effectively deliver many small group interventions and this is having a positive impact on the progress of many low attaining pupils. Teaching assistants are also used well in the classrooms in supporting particular pupils or small group activities.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Standards reached at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in 2014 were lower than those attained by the majority of pupils nationally. Pupils enter the school with skills typically below those expected for their age. Even so, these results were poor. Recent improvements in the quality of teaching and assessment have resulted in pupils' better achievement. These improvements were seen by inspectors in the pupils' work and through discussions with pupils. The school is on an improving trajectory but standards are still not good in all year groups.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils left the school attaining almost two years behind all pupils nationally in mathematics, reading and writing and approximately two terms behind other pupils at the school. Data for 2015 indicate that this gap will remain. Senior leaders have started to address the difference in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils by providing additional tuition and specific teaching sessions to support them.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to their classmates. School data indicates that pupils who are new to the school and speak English as an additional language are benefitting from improved teaching and support, so that the attainment gap with other pupils at the school is narrowing.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress, but it is not rapid enough. Improvement in provision for these pupils are apparent but are too recent to have significant impact on results for 2015.
- The standards in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) have improved significantly for 2015 and recent data indicate that results will be broadly in-line with other pupils nationally.
- Attainment of the most-able pupils is broadly in-line with national expectations in mathematics and English.
- Pupils enjoy reading and have access to a broad range of age-appropriate and stimulating texts. They can describe favourite books and authors. Younger readers have a wide range of strategies and are able to apply their phonics knowledge to support their reading. Older pupils have a more limited range of strategies and struggle to read challenging words with confidence.

The early years provision is good

- Children in the early years make good progress. They enter the provision with skills below those typical for their age and many pupils enter with weak language skills. The stimulating environment is conducive to children becoming excited by their learning and making good progress. Accurate observations and recording of children's development mean that staff have a clear understand of a child's next steps.
- In 2014, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development was below national averages. Inspectors looked at children's work and reviewed recent assessments, confirming the setting's findings that achievement is significantly improved for 2015 and will broadly meet national expectations for a good level of development.
- Children's behaviour is good. They are supported to work collaboratively and clearly care for one another and their environment. As a consequence, they feel safe. During a nature activity a child became distressed by potential injury to the woodlouse he was examining. He was comforted by his peers and staff and reassured that the bug would be returned to its natural habitat. Adult expectations for behaviour are high and pupils respond positively to established routines.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. There is a strong team of like-minded staff who put children's needs and development at the centre of all activities planned. The provision is well-resourced and established assessment routines ensure that every child's progress is accounted for. Teachers' assessments of children's learning are checked to ensure their accuracy. The leader has developed staff's expertise in good assessment practice by identifying examples of good-quality evidence to support their judgements.
- The setting's nurturing and engaging ethos supports transition into school for both children and their parents. Staff visit homes, host introductory coffee mornings and organise stay-and-play sessions prior to children entering the setting. The good progress children make during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage supports effective transition from Reception into Year 1 as they are well prepared.
- Teachers plan activities that promote independence and a love of learning. Established programmes are used to support children with specific needs or difficulties and these are improving outcomes, particularly for children with additional language needs. In both Reception and Nursery, activities chosen by the children and those directed by adults support all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and ignite children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.

What inspection judgements mean

Academy		
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	139575
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	449918

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	449
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Stewart
Principal	Theresa Rogers
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01842 753279
Fax number	01842 751115
Email address	office@norwichroad.attrust.org.uk

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