

# Acle Academy

South Walsham Road, Acle, Norwich, Norfolk NR13 3ER

**Inspection dates** 1–2 December 2015

**Overall effectiveness** **Inadequate**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Leaders, including governors, have failed to address a decline in the quality of education provided by the academy. They do not have the capacity to make the changes necessary to bring about rapid improvement.
- Governors have failed to hold senior leaders to account with sufficient rigour. Senior leaders have not effectively held middle leaders to account for the standards achieved in their subjects.
- Until very recently, leaders at all levels have not had an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching in the academy. This has led to a failure to address poor practice and slowed progress.
- Monitoring of achievement has been inaccurate. Unreliable assessment practices mean that too often, learning is planned that does not challenge pupils appropriately.
- The quality of teaching varies too widely and often is not well matched to the different capabilities of pupils. Teachers do not consistently apply the academy's policy when providing feedback to pupils to them to improve their work. This limits pupils' progress.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are not developed sufficiently across all subjects.
- Achievement in key subjects has been low and is not improving quickly enough.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is not analysed effectively. Gaps in their achievement compared with their peers are too wide and are closing too slowly.
- Some pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs are not effectively provided for. Their individual needs are not routinely met and they do not make enough progress.
- Teachers do not apply the academy policies on managing behaviour consistently. This frustrates pupils, the large majority of whom want to learn and want to do well.
- Too many pupils lack confidence that the academy's response to bullying or name-calling will be timely and effective.
- The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is not well developed. The curriculum does not adequately prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Attendance, which is below the national average, has not improved quickly enough. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils.

### The school has the following strengths

- The highly determined acting headteacher, supported by the recently reformed governing body, has quickly developed a strong understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy. Together, they have begun to take the actions needed to improve the academy.
- Pupils achieve well in some subjects such as physical education and textiles. In some classes and subjects, where there are pockets of effective teaching, pupils achieve well.

## Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and outcomes for all pupils, by:
  - providing teachers with accurate assessment information which they then use well to plan interesting and inspiring lessons that challenge pupils of all abilities
  - ensuring that pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are developed well in all subjects.
- Improve leadership and management, by:
  - increasing the capacity of leaders to bring about change
  - accelerating the work begun by the acting headteacher to restore an ethos which is characterised by high expectations of all pupils by all staff
  - establishing priorities for improvement, based on an accurate understanding of the work of the academy, that have clear timescales and measurable targets
  - ensuring that middle leaders are clearly accountable, well trained and are leading effectively
  - making sure that all pupils' progress is accurately monitored, including that of those who are disadvantaged and are the most able
  - accelerating the implementation of the actions outlined in the recent review of pupil premium spending
  - ensuring that the individual needs of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs are diagnosed effectively and that teachers plan lessons that take account of those needs
  - reviewing and amending the curriculum to ensure that it builds on the prior learning and capabilities of all pupils and prepares them for life in modern Britain
  - ensuring that staff understand and apply all academy policies consistently, including those on behaviour and feedback
  - ensuring that the governing body provides robust challenge and support.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
  - urgently addressing pupils' lack of confidence in how adults deal with bullying timely and effectively
  - further developing the work to improve attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

It is recommended that the academy does not appoint newly qualified teachers without the agreement of one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leaders and governors have failed to maintain a culture in which expectations are high and where pupils can thrive. They have been too slow to address a decline in standards since the last inspection. As a result, many pupils have not achieved the outcomes of which they are capable.
- Until very recently, leaders have not had an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching across the academy. They have previously presented an over-optimistic picture of teaching in their self-evaluation. Consequently, teaching which requires improvement or has been inadequate has gone unchallenged and this has slowed progress. Similarly, the most effective practice has not been shared across the academy.
- Tracking of achievement by leaders at all levels has been inaccurate and has presented too rosy a picture of the progress that pupils are making. Leaders have not sought external validation of the accuracy of teachers' assessments until recently. This has restricted leaders' effectiveness in planning and implementing actions to help pupils who are underachieving. Recent improvements to assessment procedures have not had time to have an impact. Leaders' knowledge of current performance, while improving, is still not accurate enough.
- Funding to support pupils eligible for the pupil premium has not been used effectively. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is not improving quickly enough because leaders have repeated strategies and actions without evaluating their effectiveness on raising standards for these pupils.
- Middle leaders have not been robustly held to account for the achievement of pupils in their areas of responsibility. This has reduced their effectiveness in improving the quality of teaching across the academy. While middle leaders explain that they are now more accountable and empowered, not all have had appropriate training to enable them to carry out this aspect of their work.
- Leaders acknowledge that they have not done enough to ensure that the curriculum is well matched to the capabilities of all pupils. As a result, the prior learning of pupils is not always taken into account, leading to repetition of topics and tasks. This is not ensuring equality of opportunity or sufficient challenge for all pupils, and too many underachieve. Enrichment opportunities exist, such as homework clubs and a wide range of musical and sporting events. However, pupils are rightly concerned that there are too few educational visits and they think that those that are provided are too expensive.
- The provision for pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is not developed sufficiently well. The individual needs of these pupils are not precisely assessed. Consequently, teachers do not have the accurate information they need to plan learning that meets their needs effectively. This slows the progress made by these pupils.
- Leaders' management of staff performance has lacked rigour and has failed to drive up standards of teaching and pupil achievement. Governors and leaders are aware of this weakness and are starting to establish clearer expectations of staff across the academy.
- Academy leaders have begun to work with the local authority to make improvements to the quality of leadership and management. This has included a review of governance, a review of the effectiveness of how funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent, and additional support for senior leaders. Some of this support has come too late to address the decline in the quality of education at the academy. The acting headteacher is making effective use of the support of a local headteacher, which is helping to establish clearer priorities for the academy.
- The acting headteacher has begun to clearly and openly identify the areas of strength and weakness across the academy. She, along with the newly reformed governing body, recognises the need to address these in ways that are both rapid and sustainable. However, their actions to improve leadership and management, behaviour and teaching are too recent to have had a significant impact.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The governing body has not effectively held leaders to account for the standards of education provided across the academy. It has accepted information provided by senior leaders too readily. Minutes of governing body meetings demonstrate that governors have not, over time, provided robust challenge, nor addressed slow rates of improvement.
  - Until very recently, governors' oversight of performance management has lacked rigour and failed to

secure improvements in the quality of teaching.

- Until recently, governors have failed to address the financial challenges faced by the academy.
  - Governors have taken heed of the recommendations of a recent review of governance. Now, under the determined leadership of the new Chair of the Governing Body, they are taking swift action to address some of the many challenges that the academy faces. It is too soon to assess the impact of their actions.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding training and procedures are up to date, including procedures to check the suitability of adults working with children at the academy. Any concerns about children are identified and dealt with appropriately.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate**

- Teaching varies too widely. There are significant differences in the quality of planning, the range of activities, and teachers' feedback to pupils about their learning and in the management of their behaviour. Often, teaching that is not well matched to the capabilities of pupils leads to too little progress.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Lessons across a range of subjects and year groups are frequently characterised by a lack of challenge. A scrutiny of pupils' books confirmed that in too many cases, little progress was being made. For example, Year 8 pupils in a science lesson worked slowly on a topic that they had covered at primary school, and which was too easy.
- Assessment information is not accurate enough for teachers to plan effectively. Tasks are not designed carefully enough to match the capabilities of pupils. Teaching does not inspire pupils to learn or deepen their knowledge. Often, pupils find activities too easy, or on occasion, too difficult. For example, in mathematics pupils completed a simple algebraic task and sat chatting while waiting for other pupils to complete their work. As a result, they made considerably less progress than they should have done.
- Teachers do not make the most effective use of their strong subject knowledge to develop pupils' understanding and deepen their knowledge in many lessons. Teachers too willingly accept the first answer and then move to the next topic. Pupils who are often inquisitive and want to learn more are not given the chance to extend their thinking and accelerate their learning.
- Teachers do not set high expectations of how work should be presented. They do not routinely challenge work that is poorly presented or incomplete. Evidence seen in lessons and in a scrutiny of pupils' books indicated that the care that pupils took over their work varied between subjects and, in too many cases, deteriorated over time.
- Teachers do not consistently apply the academy's policy for providing feedback to pupils about their learning. Verbal and written guidance often lacks the clarity that will enable pupils to build on what they have learned. Pupils are not always given the time to respond to the feedback that is provided. This prevents pupils from developing their skills. Effective feedback and guidance was absent in too many lessons and in books in mathematics. Pupils' responses to feedback are often simplistic because they are not required to reflect on their learning.
- The development of writing and literacy is not a prominent feature of many lessons. There are too few opportunities for analytical writing. Spelling and grammatical mistakes are not routinely corrected in lessons or books. Mistakes are repeated and pupils do not have the opportunities to improve their literacy skills quickly enough. Similarly, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for students to develop their numeracy skills.
- Pupils told inspectors that teachers do not manage behaviour consistently; a fact that causes frustration to pupils, the large majority of whom arrive at school keen to learn. Evidence seen in some lessons confirms this to be the case. The majority of staff who completed the academy's own survey agree that behaviour is not managed consistently. This inconsistency leads to low-level disruption in a minority of lessons, which slows the progress of pupils.
- Where teaching is strong, pupils demonstrate what they are capable of achieving. In these lessons, teachers' expectations are high, activities are well planned and feedback is regular and effective. For example, in a textiles lesson, Year 11 pupils spoke with pride about their work and how their teacher's careful guidance had helped them to make the progress which was clearly evident in their portfolios. In physical education lessons, expectations were high and pupils were interested and resilient, resulting in them making good

progress. Pupils in a Year 11 English lesson were full of praise for the support their teacher had provided and were able to talk about the skills they had developed in their analysis of their chosen text.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Many pupils commented that they did not have faith that adults in the academy would deal with bullying or name-calling. They gave examples of where adults had told them to sort it out themselves, or where pupils had not reported it as they felt it would not be addressed. This has resulted in a minority of them not feeling safe at times in the academy.
- Pupils understand different types of bullying and report that racist and homophobic bullying is very rare. Many pupils explained that they did not think that bullying is a significant issue at the academy. They did, however, report that name-calling takes place around the academy, something that was heard on occasion during the inspection.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not well provided for across the curriculum. Pupils explained that their peers can display a lack of respect towards each other, for example when discussing moral and cultural issues. This can go unchallenged by teachers. Inspectors saw significant evidence of tolerant, supportive behaviour, but also examples of a small minority of pupils displaying a lack of respect for their peers and, on occasion, adults in the academy. Life skills lessons make a valuable contribution to pupils' development, but opportunities across the rest of the curriculum are not exploited. Inspectors did see a few strong examples of where spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, pupils spoke maturely about how the text that they are studying has increased their awareness of the consequences of prejudice.
- Pupils understand how to stay safe and could explain the actions they take to stay safe online. Most understand the risks of extremism and also receive information on healthy living in lessons such as physical education and catering.
- The academy fulfils its duty to provide impartial careers guidance through an external careers adviser. The academy is aware that it is not meeting its responsibilities to provide careers education and guidance in Year 8 and it does not evaluate the quality of careers provision. Pupils are given opportunities to prepare for their next steps after the academy through life skills lessons. All pupils are introduced to the world of work through work experience during Year 10. There is preparation for this in life skills, but learning from work experience is not built on or used in other subjects. Life skills classes in Year 11 help to prepare pupils for their future economic well-being by developing their financial capability through, for example, a programme supported by a major commercial bank. Almost all pupils leaving the academy go on to local sixth forms, colleges or training providers.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Many pupils want to learn and do their best. They arrive at the academy interested and enthused, chatting happily and are welcoming to visitors. Where lessons do not challenge or interest them, standards of behaviour fall, as pupils lose interest and do not persevere with activities. Teachers deal with behaviour inconsistently and learning in these lessons is interrupted as a consequence.
- There are instances where pupils behave too boisterously in the corridors when moving to and from lessons. Pupils report that behaviour has improved in recent months. Inspectors saw some examples of this boisterous behaviour as well as many instances of pupils conducting themselves maturely around the academy site.
- Pupils in Year 7 display admirable enthusiasm for their learning. They take part enthusiastically in lessons, asking and answering questions and wanting to do well. However, too often this is not followed up by teachers so their learning does not move on quickly. This positive attitude to learning is less evident in the older years.
- Attendance has improved, but is still below the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is not good enough. Leaders are aware of this, and recent actions are already having a positive impact.

Persistent absence reduced significantly in the last academic year, but further improvement is required, particularly in Year 11.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

## **are inadequate**

- Pupils enter the academy with attainment that is in line with their peers nationally. Recent cohorts have left with a lower proportion of pupils achieving at least five A\* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, than their peers nationally. This gap widened in 2015.
- While there were improvements in outcomes in 2015, the overall attainment in English language, mathematics, core science and French remained too low when compared with national averages. The progress made by pupils in science and French was significantly lower than could be expected and has not improved quickly enough since the previous inspection.
- Academy leaders acknowledge that their predictions for pupil outcomes last year were inaccurate. The percentage of pupils achieving at least five A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics, declined to 48%. This was 10% below academy predictions and considerably below the academy's targets. Leaders expect results to improve this year, but believe that the improvements will be small and their predictions are not fully secure.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve the standards of which they are capable and do not make enough progress. The proportion of these pupils making expected and more than expected progress in English and, in particular, mathematics, has been much lower than their peers in school and nationally, and gaps are not closing quickly enough. Academy leaders expect gaps to close this year, but acknowledge that this expectation is based on unreliable assessment information. While leaders now track the progress of these pupils, they do not analyse this information well across all subjects and have only recently begun to intervene quickly enough to help them to make better progress.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs make variable progress from their individual starting points. This is because some teaching and extra support is not well matched to their specific learning needs.
- Academy leaders do not effectively analyse the progress of the most-able pupils. The attainment of these pupils has not been as good as it should be. Evidence seen in books and in lessons indicates that a lack of challenge is limiting these pupils' opportunities to achieve the higher grades and is slowing their progress.
- Evidence seen during the inspection indicates that progress is not improving quickly enough across many subjects in Key Stage 3. Achievement information provided by academy leaders demonstrates that pupils are making stronger progress across the curriculum in Year 7. However, this is not consistently the case in Years 8 and 9, and leaders explained that the evidence that they presented was not as reliable as it should be. Evidence seen in lessons and in pupils' work over time indicates that a lack of challenge is hampering the progress of pupils of all abilities, particularly in Years 8 and 9.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138758
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	10008002

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	545
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rob Hayles
<b>Acting headteacher</b>	Maxine Blocksidge
<b>Telephone number</b>	01493 750431
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.acle.norfolk.sch.uk">www.acle.norfolk.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@acle.norfolk.sch.uk">info@acle.norfolk.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	24–25 April 2013

## Information about this school

- The academy opened in 2012.
- It is smaller than an average secondary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (government funding to support disadvantaged pupils and looked after children) is average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is lower than average.
- The academy does not currently make use of alternative provision.
- The acting headteacher has been in post for 11 weeks. Prior to this, there was an interim headteacher in post for eight weeks.
- A review of governance has taken place and a newly-reformed governing body is in place and has met four times since October.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 42 lessons and four tutor sessions.
- The inspection team spoke with pupils in lessons: when arriving at the academy in the morning, at break and lunchtime and in small groups.
- Inspectors met with the acting headteacher; members of the senior team; subject and year leaders; teachers; four governors, including the new Chair of the Governing Body; representatives from the local authority; and a local headteacher who is supporting the academy in its work.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation including: the academy self-evaluation and improvement plan; minutes of governing body meetings; emails from parents; analysis of surveys conducted by academy leaders; and documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors also considered 24 parent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and four written parental responses. They also took account of pupils' views and staff views.

## Inspection team

John Lucas lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Adrian Lyons	Her Majesty's Inspector
Prue Rayner	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Tomkow	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nicola Hood	Ofsted Inspector



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